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On March 4, 1863--the day upon which President Abraham Lincoln signed the act of Congress which established Idaho Territory--more than one gold rush in the new territory was underway. Biggest of them all was the gold rush to Boise Basin.

Eight or ten thousand men already had reached the thriving new Boise Basin communities and thousands more were on their way. Placerville, Centerville, West Bannock (soon to be renamed Idaho City), and Hog'em (or Pioneer City, for those who objected to the original descriptive name) had sprung up in the fall of 1862: these were destined to be Idaho's major attraction in the spring of 1863. Gold rushes to other promising 1862 discoveries--Warren's Diggins to the north and East Bannock on the upper Missouri to the east--also were underway. (The East Bannock mines are in Montana now: in its first year Idaho included all of Montana and practically all of Wyoming in a territory substantially larger than Texas.) Everyone knew that more gold excitements were only a matter of time. As the next season of prospecting got started, discovery of the South Boise mines (Rocky Bar) was followed in a month or two by the Owyhee mines (Silver City) May 18 and by Virginia City (soon to become part of Montana) May 26. Confidence that one new gold country would follow another built up a great Idaho excitement over the Pacific Coast and the Mid-West. If anything like all of the people who were reported to have started for the new Idaho mines had actually reached them, Idaho would have gained enough population to justify statehood in that first year.

Indian problems were a matter for concern in all parts of Idaho. Only two days after the new territory came into existence, Jeff Standifer and his Boise Basin volunteers went out on a drastic six week campaign to subdue the local Indians and to wipe out resistance which had been expressed in various skirmishes during the previous nine years. Then on June 9, some of the Nez Perce bands in North Idaho agreed to a new treaty by which their reservation was reduced greatly in size: commencing in 1860, Pierce, Lewiston, Elk City, and Florence had been established on Nez Perce lands in violation of United States law and the original Nez Perce treaty; now the United States asked the Indians to open the greater part of the Nez Perce Reservation to legal white occupation. Some of the bands were willing, and others--mostly those who lived on the lands to be relinquished--

were not. But unlike some of the Plains Indians who inhabited what then was eastern Idaho, the Nez Perce did not go to war over the matter of white intrusion.

Military posts to help hold down the Indians also were built during Idaho's first year. Two--Fort Lapwai near Lewiston, and Fort Laramie near the Idaho-Nebraska boundary--already existed. Two more came in 1863. Both were erected on the Oregon Trail. Camp Connor, along with the original town of Soda Springs, was established May 20. Then on July 4, a site was chosen for a new United States military post of Fort Boise. Three days later, a Boise townsite was laid out near the fort, and before the end of 1864, that new community was designated territorial capital.

Appointed by President Lincoln to serve as Idaho's governor, William H. Wallace decided to organize the new territory in Lewiston, July 10. Preparations were made to elect a legislature and an Idaho delegate to Congress, October 31. In order to apportion the legislature, an Idaho census was taken in September. Out of a total population of 32,342, more than 16,000 were in Boise county. Nearly 12,000 of the remainder were in mining camps destined to become Montana. (This census omitted Idaho's oldest town of Franklin, founded April 14, 1860, and the new Bear Lake community of Paris, established September 26, 1863.

These were thought to be in Utah.) In the election which followed the census, Governor Wallace was chosen Idaho's delegate to Congress. So after December 1, 1863, territorial Secretary William B. Daniels served the rest of Idaho's first year as acting governor.

When the Idaho legislature assembled in Lewiston, December 7, 1863, the problem of organizing a government and providing law enforcement for a territory so enormous as the original Idaho remained unsolved. The notorious Lloyd Magruder murder on the Nez Perce Trail, September 15, led to trial and conviction of the perpetrators in Lewiston while the legislature was in session. But in the distant Montana mines, crimes attributed to Henry Plummer's gang led to suppression by a vigilante organization--also while the legislature was in session. The legislature decided unanimously, December 30, to ask Congress to create a new territory to accommodate that remote section; eventually, although the legislature's boundary recommendation was disregarded, Montana was established from northeastern Idaho, May 26, 1864. In the meantime, a new governor, Caleb Lyon of Lyonsdale, was appointed for Idaho, February 26, 1864. Although he took his oath of office March 2--just two days before Idaho's first anniversary--he did not reach Lewiston and actually take office until August 8. By that time, Idaho was well past its eventful first year as a political commonwealth.