

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FROM TERRITORY TO STATEHOOD

The land that would become the state of Montana had many different owners and governments before it finally became a state.

Vocabulary

territory	petition	rights	Senate
state (n)	House of Representatives		representation
Republican Party	Congress	Democratic Party	constitution

How a Territory Became a State

As more and more people came to Montana, its government kept changing. In the western United States, as white people settled an area and the Indians were moved to reservations, the area would first become a territory of the United States. This meant it was part of the United States, but held few rights. As the population of a territory grew, it would eventually apply to the United States government to become a state.

There were several advantages to being a state over being a territory:

1. A state had full representation in Congress, while a territory had a delegate who was non-voting.
2. A state had the power to tax local businesses, but a territory did not.
3. A state could sell land to pay for education and other government functions, but a territory could not.
4. Citizens of states could elect their own governor, but territorial governors were appointed by the President of the United States.

To become a state, the citizens of a territory had to write a state constitution and have it approved by the U.S. Congress.

Montana Becomes a Territory

The land which became Montana was part of a large number of territories before it was known as Montana. As the population of one part of a territory grew and that area became a state, a new territory would be formed out of the land that was left.

Eastern and Western Montana, because they have such different geography, were not always part of the same territory.

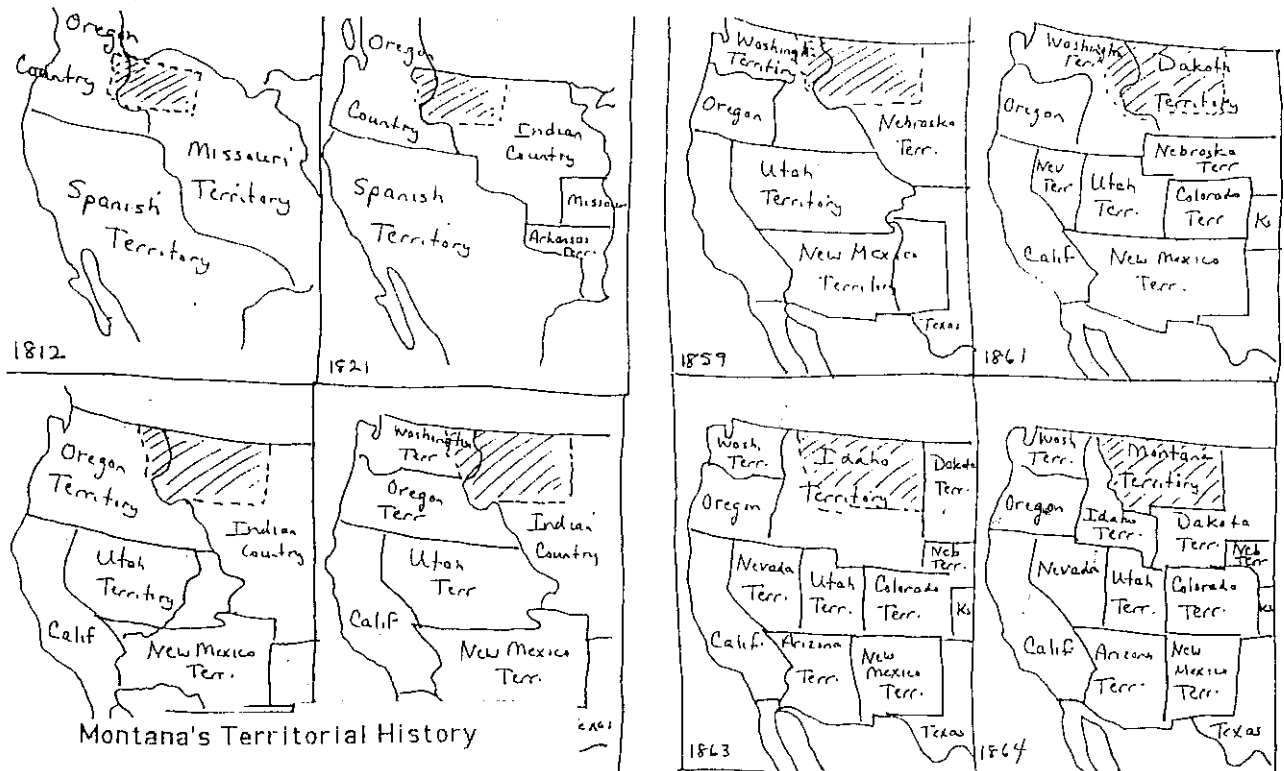
Eastern Montana was part of seven different territories:

- up to 1805 - Indian Territory
- 1805 - 1812 - Louisiana Territory
- 1812 - 1821 - Missouri Territory
- 1821 - 1854 - Indian Country
- 1854 - 1861 - Nebraska Territory
- 1861 - 1863 - Dakota Territory
- 1863 - 1864 - Idaho Territory

Western Montana was part of four different territories:

- up to 1846 - Oregon Country (owned by both the United States and Britain)
- 1848 - 1853 - Oregon Territory
- 1853 - 1863 - Washington Territory
- 1863 - 1864 - Idaho Territory

When Idaho Territory was created in 1863, both parts of Montana were combined into the same territory for the first time.



During the 1860's, more and more people moved into the land which would become Montana to find gold and many stayed. Soon, they wanted a territory of their own because the capital of Idaho Territory was too far away and it was hard to get there. Sidney Edgerton was sent to Washington, D.C. to petition the U.S. Congress to create a new territory. Congress agreed. The bill creating the new Territory of Montana was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on May 26, 1864. The name Montana comes from a Spanish or Latin word meaning "mountainous." Edgerton was appointed the first territorial governor.

Statehood

As the population of Montana grew, the citizens wanted more and more to become a state. They wanted to be represented in Congress and to have the other rights that a state had.

Montana first tried to become a state in 1866. A constitution was written, but for some reason it was never sent to the U.S. Congress for approval.

In 1884 the people of Montana again wanted to try to become a state. This time a state constitution was sent to Congress. In Congress at this time, the Senate was controlled by the Republican Party and the House of Representatives was controlled by the Democratic Party. The Senate did not want another state to enter the Union which would vote for the Democratic Party. Since the voters of Montana were mostly Democrats, the Senate would not allow Montana become a state.

Finally, on February 22, 1889, the two houses of Congress agreed to compromise and allowed North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Washington to become states once they had drawn up state constitutions. Montana's Constitutional Convention met and wrote a new state constitution. It was approved by the voters of Montana and the U.S. Congress. On November 8, 1889, President Benjamin Harrison formally proclaimed Montana the forty-first state of the Union. It was soon called "The Treasure State," and Joseph K. Toole was elected the first governor.