

Bonneville County Heritage Association Downtown Idaho Falls Treasure Tour “Experience Idaho Falls’ History”

Saturday, September 15th
10 am - 1 pm

FEEL FREE TO BEGIN AT ANY STOP



Stop #1

Presenter: Susan Mardis

Location: Westside of Taylor Crossing Bridge (in front of new Marriott on the Snake River)

Sites: Taylor Crossing Bridge & Railroad Bridge

Why Important: In 1865, Matt Taylor erected a wooden toll bridge across the Snake River to allow supplies to travel from Utah to Montana gold camps. From that, the community of Eagle Rock sprung. In 1879, a metal rail road bridge was built just downriver.

Stop #2

Presenter: David Nipper

Location: Downtown Idaho Falls power plant (gazebo)

Sites: Original Idaho Falls water system & power plants

Why Important: Shortly after the founding of Eagle Rock, a windmill was placed on the Snake River to pump water into a tank. That tank provided water to the original inhabitants who lived on the east side of present day Capital Avenue. In 1900, Mayor Clark campaigned on launching a municipal power system and built the City's first powerplant on the corner of Boulevard and 10th Street (using water flowing in a canal). Today's four power plants provide a significant portion of the community's power.

Stop #3

Presenters: Joe Stewart and Ann Rydalch

Location: Art Museum of Eastern Idaho (immediately south of power plant)

Site: Original Idaho Falls cemetery

Why Important: The original cemetery ran from the Snake River over modern day Capital into the neighborhood to the east. This is where many of the original residents were buried. After the cemetery was moved, bones resurfaced from time to time.

Stop #4

Presenters: Mary Jane Fritzen and Val Crapo

Location: Railroad tracks behind Idaho Falls City Library (immediately north of parking lot)

Sites: Livery & Railroad Station

Why Important: Wagons going through Idaho Falls needed support. The original livery (located where Key Bank now sits) provided that support. When the railroad came through, the original station sat where the library grounds are today. Of note, the original roads in Idaho Falls aligned off of the railroad.

Stop #5

Presenter: Linda Beckstead

Location: Park Street & Broadway (north east corner)

Sites: Early buildings of Idaho Falls

Why Important: Some of the oldest buildings in Idaho Falls still standing are in the first block of Park Street.

Stop #6

Presenter: Steve Taggart

Location: Broadway Bridge (north east corner on edge of Greenbelt)

Sites: Wilson Hunt Expedition & Lemhi Shoshone camp site & Keefer Island

Why Important: In 1811, the Wilson Hunt expedition tried to sail down the Snake River. They camped upstream across from the LDS Church. In 1907, the Lemhi Shoshone were forcibly forced to leave the Lemhi Valley and move to the Fort Hall reservation. They camped on the site of the LDS Church. Keefer Island is named after Fred W. Keefer, one of the community's earliest settlers who worked on the local railroad infrastructure. He claimed the island and built the cabin that still stands.

Stop #7

Presenters: Gary Goodson, Evan Filby

Location: Westside of Snake River near historical signs (Just north of north west corner of Broadway Bridge)

Sites: Famous Falls, World War II Prisoner of War Camp, Circus Site & Cattle Drives

Why Important: Originally, this area was known as Black Rock Canyon in reference to the basalt. When the City of Idaho Falls built the power plant below, a low dam was built across pre-existing rapids creating the Falls. During World War II, a prison camp for German prisoners was constructed near the hotel. Prisoners often worked during the day at the local farms. Also, when circuses would visit Idaho Falls, they would set up their tents near the Porter Canal. During the 1870s many large herds of cattle crossed the Snake River at Eagle Rock. During low water they would ford the river and during high water they would pay tolls to cross Taylor's bridge.

Learn more about the Bonneville County Heritage Association at bonnevilleheritage.org.