

PAID FOR BY MELALEUCA
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The Community Page

The Value of Vision

How to cross the river

Winter, 1865: Matt Taylor risked his money and his reputation on a venture that seemed improbable at the time—a bridge strong enough to allow wagons full of freight to cross the treacherous Snake River at Black Rock Canyon.

The makings of a town took root along with the bridge—an eating place, a livery, and a store where one could purchase “all manner of supplies.” A stage stop was next—then the railroad, settlers, and the “Great Feeder” irrigation canal to turn the arid volcanic soil into an agricultural oasis.

Eventually, the fledgling town—first known as Taylor’s Landing, later as Eagle Rock—grew up to become the modern-day city of Idaho Falls.

And, over time, the piece of land that gave it birth became the ugliest area in Bonneville County—an unsightly commercial junk yard stacked full of twisted metal, construction remnants, and abandoned automobiles rusting away, waiting to be hauled off for recycling.



“The Protector” monument at Taylor Crossing.



Rollie Walker (on the right) and team

Cleaning up the mess

Summer, 1995: Lorin and Rollie Walker were eating lunch one afternoon, across the river from where the bridge once stood. Knowing that the property had far too much potential to be used as a junk yard, the brothers sat there in their irrigating boots, shaking their heads at the mess and talking about what could be done.

A vision of urban renewal sprung from that discussion—one that would honor Matt Taylor’s original dream, a vision that would transform heaps of rusting metal into a place of beauty.

Rollie and Lorin envisioned a bustling business corridor with picturesque buildings, plenty of green grass, and a huge fountain in the center of a large roundabout. That fountain would later take form as a unique monument—a tribute to the city of Idaho Falls.

The Protector

“The Protector” is the world’s largest eagle monument. Scaled three times life-size, the sculpture depicts a mother eagle feeding her babies while the father, with his 21 foot wingspan, keeps watch on a mountain lion from above.

The water feature, standing at the entry to the Taylor Crossing on the River project, has a base built exclusively from lava rock excavated during the cleanup of the riverbank. No part of it is synthetic—it’s all natural rock.

A work that will endure

Summer, 2011: Just as Matt Taylor had done before them, Rollie and Lorin Walker took a big risk when they set about making their dream become reality—but their work has paid off handsomely...at least for the citizens of Idaho Falls.

The former eyesore along the river is now a point of pride for the city, and the Walkers’ work spurred other valu-



Aerial view of the junk yard on the Snake River before construction



Taylor Crossing business building



Taylor Crossing landscaping

able development. Examples include the Olive Garden, Famous Dave’s Barbecue, Starbucks, and Super Walmart.

The real estate market went south at the worst time for the Walkers. A new but unfinished hotel at Taylor Crossing still stands vacant. The project may not have yet turned out financially as well as they hoped, but we applaud their courage, their vision, and their accomplishment. The Walkers’ contribution to the city of Idaho Falls will never be forgotten.

Economic woes come and go. Public opinion takes its twists and turns. But, just as the entire region benefited from Matt Taylor’s bridge, it has also benefited from the vision, investment, and courage of Rollie and Lorin Walker.

We are grateful!

For years, whenever Melaleuca picked up prospective employees or clients from the airport and drove them to the Melaleuca office, we would always bypass the area by the Snake River that was then an ugly junk yard. We didn’t want our visitors to get a bad first impression of the city. But now, we always drive them down that same road through the beautiful corridor known as Taylor Crossing. It is very impressive! And a totally different experience! Thanks to the Walkers, it’s now beautiful!

Frank L. VanderSloot
CEO, Melaleuca