

The Georgia Historical Marker Program

Program Guidelines

The mission of the Georgia Historical Marker Program is to recognize historically significant people, places, and events in Georgia history and to educate the public about them.

Introduction

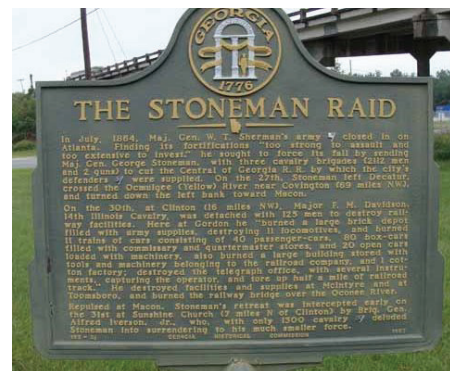


Since 1998 the Georgia Historical Society has administered the Georgia Historical Marker Program. Since that time, nearly 250 new historical markers (black with silver lettering and the Society's seal on top, as seen at left) on a wide variety of topics have been installed across the state. The program operates through partnerships with local community, government, civic, and religious groups throughout Georgia and with the support of the Georgia General Assembly through limited funding for new marker projects. Erecting new historical markers is a competitive, application-based process in which the cost of each new marker is shared between the Society and the sponsor(s) of each successful marker application. The approval process involves an independent Marker Review Committee that meets once annually to review submitted historical marker applications.

In cooperation with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the custodian of state owned historical markers, GHS is now taking the lead on the maintenance and repair of approximately 2,000 historical markers erected by the State of Georgia prior to 1998. These older markers date back as early as the 1950s and are typically green and gold with the seal of the State of Georgia on the top of the marker plaque (see below). Based on the amount of available funding to support the program, GHS is in the process of developing a system to identify and address the needs of these markers across Georgia.

Existing Historical Markers

The State of Georgia actively erected new historical markers from the early 1950s until the mid-1990s. During that time, approximately 2,000 markers were installed across our state. The busiest time for the program was during the 1950s in preparation for the centennial of the American Civil War. The result today is a large number of aging markers located in places that have seen enormous change since their initial installation. Many have sustained damage, and many others are no longer visible or accessible to those wishing to read them.



Since taking the lead on coordinating the maintenance of these older markers in July 2015, it has been the goal of the Georgia Historical Society to do everything possible to care for these aging

historical resources. While limited in our ability to repair or replace every one of the many markers needing attention, our interest in documenting the condition and needs of the markers and trying to find workable solutions to these issues is constant. To that end, we invite Georgians to contact us with information on damage and theft of these markers, and also with concerns over marker locations. Please use the [form found here](#) to report marker concerns. Of course, we also welcome interest in “adopting” specific markers or proposals to help with cleaning or caring for the markers. For more information on existing markers and how you can help with their care and maintenance, please contact Sheila Boone at sbooner@georgiahistory.com or 912.651.2125, ext. 131.

New Historical Markers

Application and Review

The Marker Application Checklist outlines all requirements for submitting a historical marker application. Those requirements include a signed agreement from the property owner(s) of the proposed marker site, a signed agreement from the sponsoring organization(s), images of the subject of the marker and of the proposed installation site, a proposed marker text of around one hundred twenty-five words, and a historical document. All applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss all potential marker projects with GHS staff. The application process can be lengthy and experience has shown that the more contact the applicant has with GHS, and the more they are able to work together early in the process to refine the application, the better chance the application has for success.

All historical marker applications are due to the Georgia Historical Society by September 1st each year. Applications are then reviewed by the independent Historical Marker Review Committee at their annual meeting in October. Applications will not be reviewed at any other point during the year. Applicants will be informed of the Committee’s decision following the Review meeting.

Marker Costs and Timeline

The cost to the Georgia Historical Society to administer the Georgia Historical Marker Program is in excess of \$5000 per marker erected. Since 1998, the program has been supported by the State of Georgia with additional funds provided by marker sponsors through cost-share arrangements. Under this system, GHS has been able to ensure that this important statewide program continues.

However, ongoing reductions in program funding as well as increased interest in the marker program have necessitated changes in our procedures. Effective immediately, and regardless of the applicant’s ability to fully fund the marker, full application materials are due by September 1st each year. *All* marker applications will be reviewed by the Committee at their annual meeting in October. During the meeting, all applications are either approved or rejected. Some rejected applications are encouraged to revise and resubmit in a subsequent cycle with specific changes in focus or with more substantial research. Rejected applications are eligible to reapply up to two more times in later cycles. Sponsors of rejected applications are strongly encouraged to work closely with GHS staff on all revised submissions.

Approved applications will fall into two categories:

- 1.) The top-ranking applications will be eligible for program support to offset the cost of the historical marker project. Sponsors of these few marker projects will be responsible for \$2,500 toward the cost of the new historical marker.
- 2.) Other applications approved by the committee may move forward only if the sponsor(s) are able to pay the full cost, at this time \$5,000.

Regardless of the amount paid by the sponsor(s), following the committee meeting there is often considerable work to do in finalizing the marker project. Committee members may request additional information or have questions about certain aspects of the application. Sponsors work with GHS staff to complete the marker process, to finalize marker text, and to schedule the marker dedication ceremony.

All applicants should be mindful of the typical timeline associated with the marker application process. If an application is approved by the Committee at the annual fall review meeting, it can take between six and twelve months for the marker to be actually installed and dedicated. While each situation is unique and GHS staff makes every effort to work with individual marker sponsors to meet mutual deadlines, applicants should take this timeline into consideration while deciding when to apply for a Georgia historical marker.

Subjects of Historical Markers

The Georgia Historical Society encourages applications on subjects of historically significant people, places, and events in Georgia history. Historic structures are often more adequately recognized by state or national historic preservation organizations, such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and are not intended to be marked through the Georgia Historical Marker Program. For more information on the National Trust and the National Register of Historic Places, please contact the state Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources at 770.389.7842.



Subjects of only local significance, and without extended importance in the larger context of state, regional, or national history are not intended to be marked through the Georgia Historical Marker Program. Applications for churches, cemeteries, and schools must clearly demonstrate their significance *beyond the local level* to be considered for a marker.

Unless there is sufficient documentary evidence to establish authenticity without question, no "firsts" will be marked.

Historical markers are not monuments. Overly adulatory language that departs in any way from an objective and dispassionate recounting of the historically documented facts will not be approved. Further, marker texts with lists of names (such as *in memoriam* tributes) are discouraged.

Markers with people as the subject are typically considered only when the subject has been deceased for at least twenty-five years. Markers recognizing events are considered only when the event in question took place at least twenty-five years prior to the date of the application. Buildings, sites,

or other structures should be at least fifty years old in order to be considered for a historical marker.

Marker Sponsors



Markers must be sponsored by at least one entity with a governing body (board of directors, trustees, etc.). Examples of such organizations include historical organizations, churches, schools, businesses, government entities, etc. Markers may not be sponsored by individuals. The name of the sponsors, following that of the Georgia Historical Society, will appear at the bottom of each marker. No more than three sponsor names may appear on any marker. Names of individuals cannot appear as sponsors.

The sponsor(s) of each historical marker must be prepared to contribute to the overall cost of each marker following approval by the Review Committee, with the Society bearing the remainder of the cost, as well as overhead expenses including staffing, travel, etc. Installation costs are the responsibility of the applicant and/or the sponsoring organization(s).

Payment in full of the sponsor's share of the marker is required prior to the order being placed with the marker foundry (but after the application is approved by the Committee). This payment may be provided by an individual, but the appropriate marker project must be clearly noted. Further, while individuals may pay for the marker, only organizations may be listed as sponsors on the marker itself.

If repair or replacement of the marker becomes necessary, the Society will require a second cost-share from the sponsor(s) to cover repair and/or replacement costs. That cost-share will be based on the cost of the repair and/or replacement marker at the time the replacement is necessary. Because prices fluctuate over time, please inquire for the current cost-share figure.

Routine maintenance of a marker is the responsibility of the sponsor(s) listed on the application. Ownership of the marker remains with the Georgia Historical Society. The sponsor(s) must agree in writing (using the Sponsor Agreement form) to monitor and maintain the marker by cleaning and/or retouching paint as necessary. The foundry will supply touch-up paint to the sponsor(s) upon request. In the event that repair or replacement of the marker is needed, the sponsor(s) should notify the Georgia Historical Society.

Questions?

For questions regarding new markers and the marker application process, please contact Elyse Butler at ebutler@georgiahistory.com or 912-651-2125 ext. 119. For questions regarding existing markers, or to report damage to a marker, please contact Sheila Boone at sboone@georgiahistory.com or 912-651-2125 ext. 131.

