

CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL OF STATE HISTORICAL MARKERS

Adopted by Resolution of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC)

[September, 2015]

1. The nomination is clear and organized and includes thorough documentation (with selected photocopies and bibliographies from primary and secondary sources) and verification of the facts claimed.
2. The person, place, event, or innovation to be marked had a significant impact on its times, and has statewide and/or national, rather than local or regional, historical significance. The significance of the subject must be historically established rather than of contemporary interest.
3. The subject to be marked had a substantial connection to Pennsylvania.
4. A marker cannot be approved for a living person. The significance of an individual's accomplishments must have had a measureable impact on history based on documentation.
5. Nominations for geographical, topographical, or natural features may be referred to an appropriate federal, state, or local agency.
6. People, places, events, and innovations already marked with existing monuments or markers receive less favorable consideration for a PHMC historical marker.
7. Nominated subjects reviewed and disapproved by the Commission three times in succession are not eligible for review panel consideration for a period of three years.
8. Governors of Pennsylvania are approved as the subject of a historical marker upon nomination (subject to Criterion #4).
9. Historic sites or properties owned by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission are approved as the subject of a historical marker upon nomination.
10. Places listed on the National Register of Historic Places and/or recognized as National Historic Landmarks or United Nations World Heritage Sites may be considered by the review panel. These places will not be summarily approved because the approval criteria for those designations are different. Nominations for these places are subject to all State Historical Marker Approval Criteria.
11. Churches and cemeteries/burial places are generally not approved unless the nomination demonstrates that the subject meets criterion 2 or 10.

Guidelines for Preparing a State Historical Marker Nomination

Nominations are evaluated every year by a five-member panel with varying areas of expertise in the field of history. They receive submitted nominations following the annual deadline and attend the Historical Marker Review Panel meeting where the nominations are discussed and voted upon. The panel's recommendations are presented to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the Commission votes on the recommendations.

It is very important that the Criteria for Approval provided with the nomination form be carefully read and thoroughly understood. The marker panel makes an informed decision using these criteria, and will also evaluate the nomination for historical accuracy, inclusion of interpretation and analysis of the subject of the nomination, demonstration of an understanding of historical context, and appropriateness of the documentation provided.

- When determining historical significance, consider what innovations an individual being nominated has made, and whether his or her impact has been statewide, national, or international in scope.
- If nominating a place, consider what changes in policy or practice were begun there.
- If nominating an event, consider how the event fits into the context of a larger movement or philosophy.
- When preparing the nomination, take into account the following questions:
 - What was the cause and effect?
 - What changes or consequences occurred and why?
 - How did the subject influence the course of events?
 - What and how widespread was the impact?
 - How was the person, place, or event of statewide or national historical significance?
 - What was the subject's lasting influence in history?
 - What role did the subject play in their area of significance?
 - What factors contributed to the subject's development?

A nomination that suggests a subject solely due to sensationalism, durability or longevity, or philanthropy or beneficence does not conform with the intention of the State Historical Marker Program. Also discouraged are nominations that advocate an individual with little or no connection to Pennsylvania. For example, a significant person who was simply born in or lived/worked briefly in Pennsylvania, but lived the majority of his or her life and made their impact elsewhere, would not be considered favorably by the panel. If such an individual was responsible for something significant in Pennsylvania, consider making the subject for nomination the innovation, event, or work of significance rather than the person, e.g. Salk Polio Vaccine rather than Jonas Salk. Individuals who spent their formative years in the Commonwealth, and subsequently went on to achieve national recognition may be considered favorably by the panel, but the association with Pennsylvania should be substantial, i.e. they should have been shaped here, and it would be helpful if they retained ties to Pennsylvania after leaving. Generally, burial sites are not considered historically significant; persons should be commemorated where their actions made an impact. Churches may be considered, but will be recommended for approval only if they were the first of their denomination or if significant changes in religious doctrine or philosophy were initiated there. The State Historical Marker Program discourages nominations that appear to have a commercial motivation, even if educational or benevolent in nature.

The nomination must be accurate, and supported with documentation provided. Panelists consider many nominations and may be unable to consult sources listed in the nomination, so it is imperative to include pertinent photocopied excerpts from valid primary and secondary sources, along with citations. Try to limit material to about 20 pages and choose wisely the information which relates most directly to the focus of your nomination.

PROCEDURES

1. Any individual or group may nominate a subject for historical marker commemoration. Submissions must be **postmarked by December 1** each year. All nominations are reviewed by an independent panel of historical experts for compliance with PHMC criteria. A commissioner appointed by the PHMC Chairman chairs the panel. PHMC commissioners act in the spring upon panel recommendations. The commissioner who chairs the panel or the PHMC Executive Director sign and send a notification letter to approved nominators. PHMC staff notify others of Commission decisions.
2. If a nomination is not approved, the nominator may submit revised nominations for the same subject in three years in succession. PHMC staff is available to work with nominators to revise or strengthen their proposals or to provide technical assistance to nominators who choose to manufacture and install a local—or unofficial—marker. All local markers must be in compliance with Title 37 Pa. Consolidated Statutes (the State History Code). Any nomination that is rejected three years in succession may not be submitted again for another three years.
3. If the Commission recommends that a nomination be resubmitted in the same year, nominators will work with PHMC staff to provide additional information or documentation.
4. The nominator receives several forms accompanying an approval letter. One form is a Funding Commitment form on which a sponsoring individual or sponsoring organization is identified to cover the cost of marker fabrication, and it must be completed and returned to PHMC before a marker can be ordered. It is strongly recommended that commitment to funding the marker is obtained by the nominator. One individual or organization must agree to receive the invoice and be responsible for payment of it, although multiple sponsoring individuals or organizations may be involved in the fundraising efforts. In some instances the nominator is affiliated with a sponsoring organization, but that is not always the case. Should several individuals be involved with a marker, the group and PHMC staff will determine the most effective means of communication to all. PHMC maintains ultimate authority over administration of the program.
5. Marker contact people should work with PHMC staff to identify a dedication date several months in advance. Normally, it takes a **minimum** of ten weeks to prepare a text, plan a ceremony, manufacture a marker, and install it.
6. PHMC staff work with marker contacts to write a text that is agreeable to both parties. PHMC is ultimately responsible for determining the accuracy of a text, whether it complies with established space and style guidelines, and making final edits. If a sponsor elects to have PHMC take responsibility for ordering with the contracted vendor, PHMC staff will communicate with the manufacturer, and place the order for the marker. Marker texts are not to be released to the press or published in any source prior to the dedication ceremony. Markers are delivered to a shipping point specified by sponsors.

7. PHMC staff and sponsors work together to identify a mutually agreeable location for the marker's placement. The most appropriate location would be where the person made an impact, where the event took place, or at the site being marked. While most locations are straight-forward, some require negotiation and discussion to determine the optimal site. Upon agreement, **the sponsor is responsible for obtaining all necessary permissions from local, state, and/or federal authorities and from any affected private parties.** *Proof of authorization and permissions must be provided in writing to the Historical Marker Program before a marker is ordered for manufacture.* **The sponsor is responsible for all costs and making all arrangements associated with installation of the marker.**
8. **Sponsors are responsible for arranging dedication ceremonies.** PHMC staff can provide guidance. Multiple nominators and/or sponsors may be involved in organizing the public dedication ceremony, although those identified as primary organizers will be the points of contact for PHMC staff. PHMC will provide written guidelines regarding invitations and programs to sponsors several weeks in advance of a dedication ceremony. If possible, a PHMC Commissioner, staff member, or associated designee will represent the Commission at the event. If not, a brief written statement will be provided to be read at the ceremony.
9. Upon installation, PHMC assumes ownership of the marker and responsibilities for maintaining it. PHMC historical markers and marker text are trademarked, copyrighted and the exclusive physical and intellectual property of the PHMC.
10. If a marker is not manufactured and installed within two years of its approval by the Commission, PHMC may choose to identify another individual or organization to take over the marker process or withdraw its approval of the nomination. Subject to the procedures outlined here, PHMC may work with a new individual or group to install the marker. If the approval is withdrawn, the subject must be nominated again and go through the standard annual review process.

HISTORICAL MARKER NOMINATION FORM

This form is available for downloading online at www.phmc.state.pa.us.

Review Policies for Approval, and then complete this form. Please type or print, using font size no smaller than 10 point.

1. Subject of Marker / Marker Title
State name of person (include birth and death dates), event, innovation, or site to be commemorated.

2. Please use the space below to provide a historical overview and specify fully the historical significance of the person, event, innovation, or site. **Be sure to explain why this marker will have meaning for people from the whole state or country, not just from your own community. If of broader significance, be sure to describe the subject's Pennsylvania connection.** Be thorough, but concise, and try not to exceed the space provided.

Pennsylvania Historical Marker Nomination Form

3. Please provide a draft of the text for the marker. (Note: A final text will be written in collaboration with PHMC staff.)

4. Are you requesting a city type marker (27" x 41½", approx. 40 words, approx. cost \$975.00) or a roadside type marker (45¼" x 45 ¾", approx. 70 words, approx. cost \$1625.00)?

Roadside type

City type

5. Bibliographical data — From which publications/sources did you obtain your information and/or can information be secured to understand the historical background, to evaluate historical significance, and to prepare appropriate marker text? Feel free to attach a list, utilizing the format below for referencing them. At least 3 or 4 sources (primary and secondary) are ideal. If completing this form as a Word document, you may delete the underlines or type over them using the “insert” key on your computer keyboard.

Author: _____

Title: _____

Date & Publisher: _____

If the source of further information is an individual person, please furnish his or her name and address.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

NOTE: Supporting Documentation is important - Attach copies of excerpts from essential published or unpublished primary or secondary source material. Again, at least 3 or 4 examples are expected. This material should support the overview you have written, and verify your claims. Letters of support are acceptable to include. Those from experts on the proposed marker subject carry the most weight.

Pennsylvania Historical Marker Nomination Form

6. Describe the suggested marker site. Are there any surviving features, built or topographical, that relate to the proposed commemoration? (While survival of such features is not a determining factor in the approval of markers, a suggested marker should be close enough to the site described to take advantage of any features that do survive. It should also be located so as to maximize visibility and accessibility to the public.) If possible, please attach a photograph. The final location will be subject to PHMC approval.

7. Provide information on suggested marker site:

If completing this form as a Word document, you may delete the underlines or type over them using the "insert" key on your computer keyboard.

County: _____

Street address or intersection (town or city location): (*"325 Main St."* or *"southwest corner of Main and Oak Streets"*)

City: _____

Highway route number (for locations other than city streets): (*"PA 322"*) _____

Nearest town and distance in miles: (*"2 miles east of Centerville"*) _____

If not a highway, identify closest highway route and give approximate distance from it:
(*".5 miles south of Pa. 6"*)

If the marker is suggested for placement inside a park, specify exact location within the park: (*"Adjacent to gazebo in Memorial Park; along Main Street side of park"*)

Pennsylvania Historical Marker Nomination Form

8. Please provide information on yourself as preparer of this form:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Zip + four code

Telephone: () _____

Fax Number: () _____

E-mail address: _____

Legislative District or Rep(s): _____

If you are writing on behalf of an organization, please indicate your title and the name of the organization (*“President, Eastern Historical Society”*).

Your signature: _____

Submission date: _____

Please submit your nomination without using cover, page protectors, bindings, and other “presentation” materials. Annual postmark deadline is **December 1**.

Return twelve (12) copies of your completed nomination form (pages 5 to 8 only) including any additional supporting material, collated into twelve (12) complete packets for distribution to evaluators, to:

Historical Marker Program
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Bureau for Historic Preservation
400 North Street, 2nd Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0093

If you have any questions about completing this form, please contact Karen Galle at (717) 705-4266, or via email at: kgalle@pa.gov.

If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired and wish to contact a hearing person via Text Telephone, you may use the PA Relay Center at 1-800-654-5984.