



Historical Marker Guidelines and Procedures

[The Alabama Historical Association](#), a private organization of people interested in Alabama's past, began sponsoring historical markers in 1950. Since 1962, the Association's Historical Marker Committee has served to encourage and assist individuals and local groups seeking recognition of the state's long and diverse past. The committee attests to the historical importance of the subject matter, reviews proposed marker text for accuracy, and assists with editing. Local people or groups pay for the marker in full.

The Association adopted a standard marker design more than four decades ago. AHA-sponsored markers are produced at [Sewah Studios](#) in Marietta, Ohio. The markers are on a double-faced cast aluminum plate with a baked enamel finish and feature the Alabama state flag at the top. The precise dimensions are 47"H x 45 ½"W. Markers weigh approximately eighty pounds. The marker's text is in gold letters on a deep blue field. Below the text, in a slightly smaller font size, are the words "Alabama Historical Association" and the year in which the marker was erected. Local groups wishing to have recognition on the marker should include it in the final sentence of proposed text. Markers should be installed between seven and ten feet in height; the post is included in the price of the maker.

The names of persons still living cannot appear on a marker except under special circumstances.

Those wishing to erect a marker should begin with the **Historical Marker Application**. This document will provide the Marker Committee Chair with the information required to begin planning for a particular marker. Below are some helpful hints that will facilitate a more rapid turnaround time for the initial application.

Format

The best way to get a sense of the Association's preferred format for marker text is to

look at existing markers. Text for more than 500 AHA-sponsored markers, divided by county, can be found on the Association's [web site](#). Look at markers in the same area to be certain your proposed text is not duplicative. A shorter selection of sample markers is included as an addendum to this guide.

The text for each side of a marker can be different. You may elect to continue the same subject on side two, or use the opposite side for another topic. Either course is acceptable to the committee. The reverse side of a marker can also remain blank.

Marker text may run up to 20 lines per side, with 62 spaces (not characters or words) per line. As a general rule, one side of a marker can be between 150 and 190 words in length. The Historical Marker Committee Chair will assist you in editing your text to ensure it conforms to the marker fabricator's formatting guidelines.

Content

Your proposed text should be concise and factual. Avoid lofty statements and sweeping generalizations. Anchor your discussion to the physical place as much as possible.

The committee serves to affirm the accuracy of proposed text, and requires the individual or group seeking a marker to provide source documentation as part of the application process. At minimum, this requires a list of sources consulted for the marker text. Photocopies of source material attached to the application is highly preferable. Information that cannot be verified by the marker committee will not be included in the marker text.

In addition to available local material, the committee recommends the following resources that may assist in preparation of text:

[*The Encyclopedia of Alabama*](#) – An online, peer-reviewed resource featuring thousands of articles on the state's history, culture, and geography.

[*The Alabama Review*](#) – The scholarly journal of the Alabama Historical Association, published continually since 1946.

[*Alabama Heritage Magazine*](#) – In publication for more than two decades, the popular magazine is a joint venture of the Alabama Department of Archives and History and the University of Alabama. *Alabama Heritage* features articles in several recurring sections such as Alabama's historic structures and the role of religion in the state's history. The magazine's feature stories each issue cover a number of topics of interest to general history enthusiasts.

Several collections at the [Alabama Department of Archives and History](#) can be of great use in drafting text for proposed markers. These include:

- *Dictionary of Alabama and Biography* – Published in the 1920s, this four-volume history of the state features capsule biographies of some of its prominent citizens and short histories of each county in Alabama. It is available online as part of the Alabama Department of Archives and History’s [Digital Collection](#).
- *Alabama Historical Quarterly* – In publication for more than three decades, the journal featured many essays on the earlier history of the state. It is available online as part of the Alabama Department of Archives and History’s [Digital Collection](#).
- [County Vertical Files](#)
- County Reference Book Collection
- [General Alabama History Vertical Files](#)
- Surname Newspaper Clipping Files
- [“Alabamians at War” Clippings Files](#)
- Regimental histories ([many available online](#))
- The largest collection of historic newspapers in Alabama

These materials can be viewed in person during the normal operating hours of the Archives’ EBSCO Research Room: Tuesday through Friday, and on the second Saturday of each month 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. The Archives is closed for all state and Federal holidays.

In addition to these sources, the committee encourages you to visit your local library or records repository.

A Word on Marker Text

The marker committee desires to work with interested citizens and groups to erect markers which reflect Alabama’s long and diverse history. The committee’s primary responsibility is to ensure that the final text is accurate, conforms to the set style of AHA’s longstanding format, and helps promote an appreciation of local and state history. The committee will not “rubber stamp” marker text. Composed of public history professionals, editors, and experienced writers, the committee will work with you to present the best possible text for your marker.

The committee offers a short style guide as an addendum to this document for you to examine as you prepare marker text. Exceptions to this guide will be exceedingly rare.

Application Procedures

With your proposed text and sources prepared, you should complete the Historical Marker Application.

Contact Information

* This begins with the organization or government entity sponsoring the marker. You will need to identify an individual contact person who can speak on behalf of the group or committee and supply his or her mailing address, telephone number(s) and email address.

* If the marker is needed before a specific date, please indicate so on the application. Current fabrication times for markers is 24 to 28 weeks, so ideally you should have marker text submitted to the committee, and funding for the marker secured, a minimum of eight months before the event to ensure timely delivery.

Marker Information – Logistics

* While the AHA does not involve itself with marker placement, we would like to have a general idea of where the marker will be placed. You should contact local authorities if the marker will be placed along the roadside or anywhere not deemed private property.

* The AHA publishes on its website the full text, sponsor, installation year, and GPS coordinates of each new marker. In the logistics section, please list the GPS location for the marker. You will find a helpful tool for determining GPS at this website: <http://www.gps-coordinates.net/>. New marker text will also be included in the AHA *Newsletter* the following spring.

* You will also need to identify a commercial address where the marker can be delivered. Sewah Studios does not deliver markers to residential addresses. A local highway department, or public works office, would be the ideal delivery location.

Marker Information – Text

You can copy your marker text, and source material, into these boxes. If you are mailing in your application, feel free to simply attach the text in a separate document to the application.

Submission

You can email the application to scotty.kirkland@archives.alabama.gov or mail it to the following address:

Scotty E. Kirkland
Chair, Historical Marker Committee
Alabama Dept. of Archives and History
Post Office Box 300100
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Final Steps

Once final text is agreed upon by your organization and the committee the marker committee chair will request a quote from Sewah Studios. Current marker costs range from \$2,800 to \$3,400.

In addition to fabrication costs, the AHA assesses a \$100 administrative fee to every new marker. This money helps to build a marker refurbishment program that will pay for up to 50% of the cost of any work on the marker during its life (excluding total replacement). Think of this as your marker's insurance policy.

Once you receive the total cost of the marker from the committee chair (which will include the administrative fee), send a check to the address listed above made payable to the **Alabama Historical Association**. The committee chair will place the order for the marker soon thereafter and keep you updated on its progress. The chair will also forward to you step-by-step procedures for proper installation of a new marker. You can expect delivery of the marker within 24 to 28 weeks.

As you plan your marker dedication ceremony, please keep AHA and the Department of Archives and History in mind. The marker committee chair will be happy to assist you in suggesting speakers or representatives from AHA should you desire their attendance. If the marker ceremony is being spearheaded by a local library, museum, or historical society, the Alabama Department of Archives and History's field services program may be able to offer helpful suggestions and support.

Finally, the marker committee would like to receive copies of any articles, press releases, or photos of the ceremony. You may direct these items to the chair.