National Historic Marker Day
Presented by the William G. Pomeroy Foundation

Marker Cleaning Guide

It’s your time to shine … your community’s historic markers that is!

Friday, April 30 marks the first annual National Historic Marker Day. This is an opportunity to show your community pride by putting in a little elbow grease (and having fun!), all while helping to celebrate and preserve local history.

We’ve all seen that historic marker in need of some well-deserved attention after years of neglect or a rough winter. Road salt, dust, pollen, tree sap and other contaminants eventually degrade the condition of historic markers. The time to act is now! By working together, we can help extend each marker’s shelf life for future generations to enjoy.
Section 1: Preparation

Step #1 – Marker Selection: Identify the historic marker you want to clean. You’re welcome to pick more than one. There’s plenty of markers to go around! If you need help finding marker locations, check out the Pomeroy Foundation’s marker map or the Historical Marker Database.

Step #2 – Permission, Parking & Safety: After you’ve selected a marker to clean, make sure you have permission to work on it. Is it on private property? Reach out to the land owner or municipality for guidance if applicable. Be mindful of traffic and parking regulations. You may want to check the location using Google Street View or scout it out in advance. In addition, please follow local and state COVID-19 guidelines.

Step #3 – Supplies: It’s time to gather your cleaning supplies. Here’s what you should consider for your supplies list: soap, water, bucket, cloth rags, sponge, non-metal scrub brush, toothbrush, portable spray washer, gloves, protective eye gear, step ladder, grass clippers, refuse or trash bags, rake, mulch (when applicable), etc.

*Don’t forget to wear clothes and shoes you won’t mind getting dirty!*
Section 2: Cleaning & Maintenance

**Step #4 – Evaluate:** When you arrive at your location you should first assess the marker's condition. How dirty is the marker? Is there flaking paint or rust? Will cleaning the marker cause more harm than good? Is the marker cast iron, aluminum or some other material? If the marker needs refurbishment or repairs, consult with your local historical society or municipality regarding who might handle that type of project.

*If you want to do a “before and after” comparison, this is the time to snap a “before” photo of the marker.*

**Step #5 – Marker Prep:** Begin by removing larger debris and residue. Follow that with an initial rinse using just water.

*If needed, go ahead and set up your step ladder.*

**Step #6 – Cleaning:** Next, prepare a mild mixture of soap and water. Wet a non-metal scrub brush with the soapy mix and begin gently cleaning one side of the marker. Start at the top and work down to the marker base.

*Consider using a soft toothbrush for detailed cleaning around raised lettering, logos and trim.*
Step #7 – Rinsing: Once the marker is lathered with the soapy mix, it’s time to rinse. Use a portable water sprayer (if you have one) or bucket of clean water and a sponge.

Remember to clean and rinse the other side of the marker.

Step #8 – Poles & Posts: Repeat the cleaning process on the marker’s pole or post. Some are made of metal, while others are comprised of materials such as concrete. Adjust your cleaning approach as needed.

Step #9 – Landscaping:
Lastly, trim any tall grass or weeds around the base of the pole. Rake leaves and remove any fallen branches and/or sticks.

If the marker is set in landscaping, you may want to spread down new mulch or edge the bed.

Section 3: Time to Celebrate!

Step #10 – Wrapping Up: You did it! You’ve put in a lot of hard work to make that marker sparkle, so put the supplies aside, step back, and take it in. After all, it’s National Historic Marker Day!
Step #11 – Take Photos:
Say “cheese” and take plenty of photos. Get some good shots of just the marker then gather ’round and pose with the marker.

We’d love to see your photos!

Email them to us at info@wgpfoundation.org & share on social media with hashtag #NationalMarkerDay

On Tuesday, May 4, the Pomeroy Foundation will publish a photo gallery on Facebook and Twitter sharing some of the photos submitted to us by National Historic Marker Day participants.

We’re Glad You Joined Us

Thanks for taking part in the inaugural National Historic Marker Day!

Save next year’s date: Friday, April 29, 2022. See you next time! Visit our National Historic Marker Day webpage for more information.

About National Historic Marker Day
According to the Historical Marker Database, there are more than 138,000 historic markers located across the United States. Many of them have not received any care or maintenance for years. National Historic Marker Day, held on the last Friday of every April, helps communities focus on maintaining their local historic markers by cleaning them and providing an opportunity to celebrate and preserve their history.

About the William G. Pomeroy Foundation
At the Pomeroy Foundation, one of our main initiatives is to help people celebrate their community’s history. Since 2006 when the Pomeroy Foundation launched its first marker program, we have provided fully funded grants for more than 1,300 historic roadside markers and plaques nationwide. We support themes that span topics from folklore and historic canals to civil rights and women’s suffrage.