

Criteria Guide for Pomeroy Foundation Historic Markers



NYS Historic marker for Caroline Clowes in Poughkeepsie, NY.

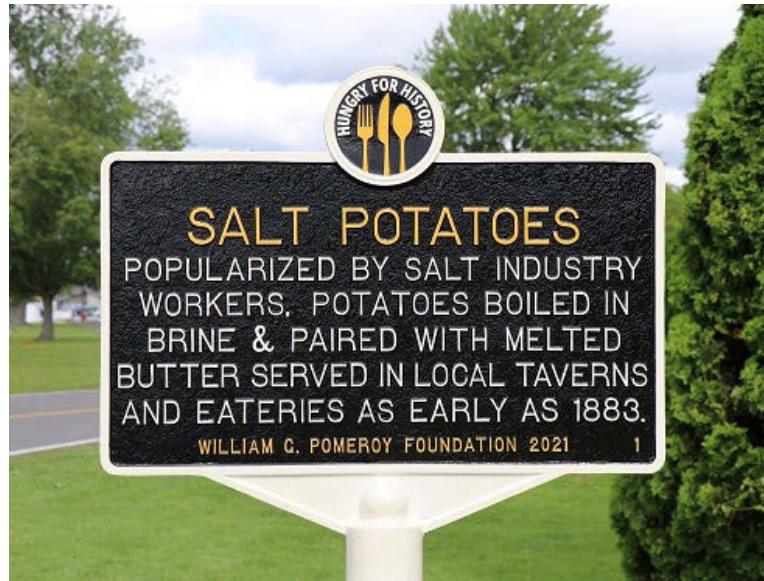
Getting Started

Welcome to the William G. Pomeroy Foundation's criteria guide. In this PDF, we outline the key information you need to know when applying for a marker grant through our roadside historic marker programs.

We cover this material in three parts:

- ✓ First, we will introduce you to our Subject Criteria
- ✓ Next, we explain our Text and Inscription Criteria
- ✓ Lastly, we outline our Location Criteria

We encourage you to return to this guide as a point of reference as often as needed when you are preparing for your marker grant application.



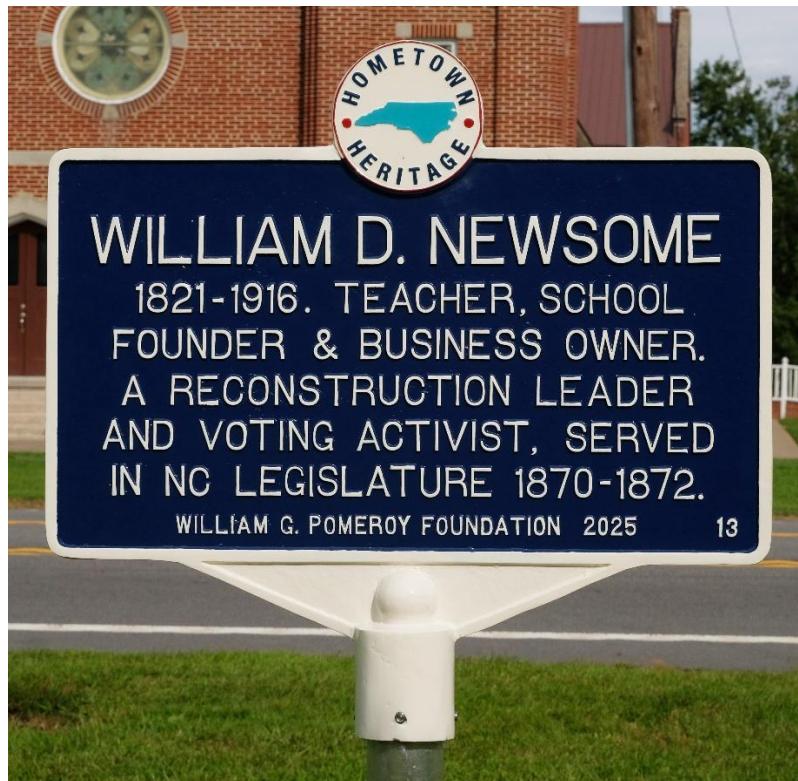
Hungry for History marker for Salt Potatoes in Syracuse, NY.

Subject Criteria

- The subject of the marker must be historically significant to the larger community or beyond, and this must be documented with primary sources.
- Think about "What history happened here?" If the subject is not significant beyond one person or family, it will not qualify for a marker.
- The subject does not need to be the "first" or "oldest" to qualify as historic.
- The subject of the marker must fall within the time frame, which is 100 years prior to the year of the application.
- The marker inscription must be proven using primary source documentation. See our website page on Primary Source documentation for more information.
- For more guidance pertaining to Buildings, Cemeteries, Farms, Places of Worship and Schools, see the section at the end of this document.

Text Criteria

- At least one key date must be included to contextualize the marker; however, the inscription should not be written simply as a list of dates.
- Inscriptions should maximize available character limits. All five lines must be used.
- Inscriptions have one title line of 15 characters and five body lines with 27 characters each.
- See our Marker Style Guide on our website for more information.



Hometown Heritage marker for William D. Newsome in Ahoskie, NC.

Inscription Criteria

- Inscriptions must be clear about why the subject (i.e. person, place, thing, event) is historically significant.
- Every single fact written on the marker must have a primary source to support it. See our Primary Sources page on our website for more information on what is accepted as a primary source.
- Inscriptions should try to tell a short story that piques interest and motivates people to want to learn more. We always write a longer description for our website marker map, but we still want the marker to inspire curiosity despite its brevity.
- Inscriptions need to be accessible to everyone, including students and visitors. We recommend writing it for a 4th/5th grade audience in mind, and avoiding jargon and complex language.
- Inscriptions must be clear about why the subject (i.e. person, place, thing, event) is historically significant. When writing your inscription, skip the value-charged language and descriptions (i.e. heroic soldiers, visionary businessman, noted author, bustling business section, etc.)
- “Firsts” are difficult, if not impossible, to prove. It would require providing primary source proof of all other starting dates, which is highly difficult to do. Similarly, claiming something is the “oldest” is only possible if all other people, places, events of the same kind are proven with primary sources to be younger. We recommend using other language, or leaving this off the marker, because we will not approve the use of “first” or “oldest” without acceptable proof.
- Anytime something is left off of the marker inscription, it still has the possibility of being included in the online marker description on our website. Even if something can’t be included on the marker itself, we will still include it on our marker map description.



Great American Rail-Trail marker for Gateway to West in Council Bluffs, IA.

Marker Inscription Example

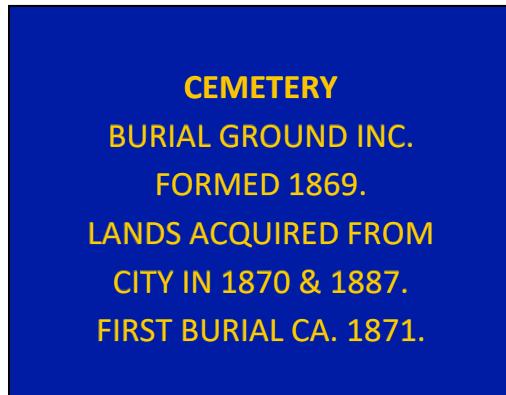
To help illustrate a high-quality marker inscription, below is an example. For comparison, we also have a low quality example. On the high quality marker inscription, you see the text maximizing space and clearly demonstrating the historical significance. The example that doesn't pass muster is lacking in several areas, including listing dates, not providing enough context and not demonstrating historical significance.

High Quality Example



Hometown Heritage marker for May Berry in Frankton, IN.

Low Quality Example



Sample inscription.

Location Criteria

- The location must relate in some way to the subject of the marker. This could be as specific as the house someone lived in, or as general as a park in the town where an event happened.
- There must be an existing, related structure that visitors can view from the marker if the subject is a building or place.
- Markers should not be placed where the visitor must intrude on private property to read it or view a site related to the marker inscription.
- It must be a safe location for viewers. This means there is nearby parking, pull-offs, or low-speed roads.
- It must be a safe distance from the road. Markers too close to the road will be considered traffic hazards and will not be approved.
- Highly visible locations are preferred. We want lots of people to see the marker as they drive by and learn about the local history.
- In areas that have harsh winters the location must be at least 10' back from the road due to salting and snow plowing. The plows and salt can contribute to the marker wearing out faster, so for the markers protection we only approve locations that will sustain minimal impact from environmental dangers.
- We recommend you double check who owns the land you are planning to install the marker on. We require a land use permission letter, but due to right-of-way in many towns the property lines are not always where we expect them to be. Use your county's Parcel Access site to view where the property lines run.
- Check out our Installation Guide for instructions on how to install your marker on our website.



Lafayette's Tour marker in Newport, NH.

Guidelines for Buildings, Cemeteries, Farms, Places of Worship and Schools

Particular attention to historical significance must be provided when submitting an application for subjects in any of the following areas: buildings, cemeteries, family farms, places of worship and schools. Please note, we do not award marker grants for structures that no longer exist. We require at least some portion to be extant and visible to provide relevance to the marker.

If your application falls into one of these areas, consult the following guidelines:

Buildings and Homes

Regardless of the type or age of structure, primary sources must prove the building or home's historical significance to the larger community or beyond. For example, a building or home might have served an important purpose, was designed by a prominent architect or had a noteworthy resident.

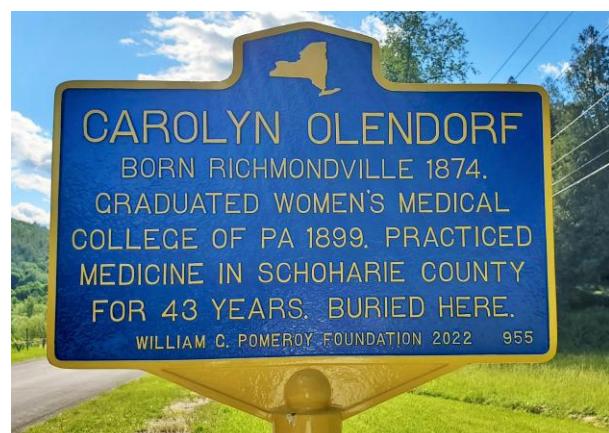
If you are commemorating a resident, focus the marker inscription on the person, not the structure. You should address how the person's historical significance had an impact on the community (i.e. town, city, county, etc.). Consider mentioning if the person served in government, civic organizations or was a business leader.

Applications regarding buildings and homes that still exist or remain actively used are strongly preferred. If the structure no longer exists, your application will not be successful. We will not fund a marker commemorating an architectural style alone—there must have been a related significant person, event, or function.

Cemeteries

First, consider if any noteworthy figures are interred at the cemetery. That information should be included in the marker inscription and must be proven with primary sources. Applications for markers recognizing unmarked or abandoned cemeteries without signage are welcomed.

For those who want to commemorate Revolutionary War soldiers' and veterans' burials only, submit your application through our Patriot Burials Historic Marker Program in partnership with the Sons of the American Revolution.



NYS Historic marker for Carolyn Olendorf in Richmondville, NY.

Family Farms

You should demonstrate the farm's historical significance to the larger community. The following questions can help you make that determination.

- Did its operation do something pioneering?
- Did the farm have a far-reaching impact?
- Does the farm retain an important feature unique to the area? (e.g. lime kilns, mill stones)

Places of Worship

Religious sites, such as churches and temples, should include information beyond identifying when it was constructed or rebuilt. As with all inscriptions, the proposed text must include more historical context than simply listing out key dates. You should try to identify connections to noteworthy events and/or historical figures.

Schools

There must be a historical significance to the larger community that goes beyond serving a specific portion of the school district. Ideally, the marker will commemorate a school building that remains an active educational site. Applications that also prove a noteworthy individual attended are encouraged.



Hometown Heritage marker for Pleasant Plains in Ahoskie, NC.

Before You Apply, Keep in Mind ...

The criteria and recommendations in this guide are designed to help you prepare a successful marker grant application with the highest quality inscription possible.

Whether you intend to commemorate one of the aforementioned categories that require special attention or a different area of local history, remember to focus on only one subject. Will your marker recognize a specific person, building, thing or event?

Our online letter of intent (LOI) is a required part of the application process. It includes your proposed marker inscription, as well as a list of primary sources to verify the historical accuracy of your text. Your LOI must be approved by Foundation staff in order to access the grant application.

Need help locating and identifying primary sources? Visit our primary sources page on our website for insights and best practices to assist you when preparing your LOI. For complete program guidelines, eligibility, and how to apply, visit the Hometown Heritage page on our website.

If you need further assistance, please contact Christy at info@wgpfoundation.org or 315-913-4060, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (EST).