

THE NEW JERSEY STATE HISTORICAL MARKER  
250<sup>TH</sup> INITIATIVE GUIDELINES  
2025

NEW JERSEY  
*Historical*  
COMMISSION



## **The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines**

### **NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

### **THE NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**2025**

#### **Mission and Goals of the New Jersey State Historical Markers Program's 250<sup>th</sup> Initiative**

Understanding our state's history is essential to understanding the development of culture and democracy in New Jersey and in the United States. All across New Jersey, hundreds of historical markers detail and commemorate events, individuals, sites, and themes significant to the state, region, and nation's history. The mission of the New Jersey Historical Markers Program is to encourage reflection upon the past, support heritage tourism, and share an inclusive history of the state that is representative of the diversity of those who have called New Jersey home.

The State of New Jersey produced two series of historical markers, the first in the 1930s and the second in the 1960s. Those produced in the 1930s (1931-1942) were erected by the New Jersey Commission on Historic Sites and were made out of cast aluminum and mounted on poles. The markers from the 1960s (1961-1972) were installed by the New Jersey Historic Sites Office to commemorate the 300th anniversary of New Jersey's establishment as a colony. These were constructed out of thinner sheet metal and mounted on poles, buildings, and fence posts, among other surfaces. The vast majority of these historical markers commemorate significant events and persons from the Revolutionary War era in New Jersey, but other topics include notable New Jerseyans, industrial history, colonial history, historical places of worship, transportation history, and many other topics.

## **The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines**

In 2022, Governor Murphy signed into law the creation of a Black Heritage Trail to “highlight Black heritage sites through historical markers and a trail-like path that connect the stories of Black life and resiliency.” This project has been overseen by the New Jersey Historical Commission’s African American History Program. For more information about the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail, visit [blackheritagetrail.nj.gov](http://blackheritagetrail.nj.gov).

The goals of the current New Jersey State Marker Program commemorating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of the United States are two-fold. The first is to install new markers that reflect the vast and varied history of all New Jerseyans. In preparation for the semiquincentennial, this program is particularly focused on erecting markers that tell a whole history of the American Revolution including its origins and the ways in which its Revolutionary ideals have impacted the state over the past 250 years. The second is to replace previously erected state markers that are related to the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the independence of the United States as requested.

## **The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines**

### **About The New Jersey Historical Commission**

The New Jersey Historical Commission (NJHC) is a state agency dedicated to the advancement of public knowledge and preservation of New Jersey history. Established by law in 1967, its work is founded on the fundamental belief that an understanding of our shared heritage is essential to sustaining a cohesive and robust democracy. The NJHC receives its funding primarily by legislative appropriation. It fulfills its mission through various initiatives, including an active grant program, a free archival evaluation service called the Caucus Archival Projects Evaluation Service (CAPES), a free artifact evaluation service called Artifact Assessment Program (AAP), the African American History Program, and RevolutionNJ. Currently, it oversees the development of the broader state historical marker program.

### **New Jersey State Historical Markers Program**

N.J.S.A. 18A:73-25.6 and N.J.S.A. 18A:73-25.7 call for the New Jersey Historical Commission to develop a program to “identify and propose sites of historical and cultural significance in the State, to be recognized by the placement of roadside markers.” In accordance with these statutes, the New Jersey Historical Commission has created a database of the location of markers erected in the 1930s and 1960s. As the next step in this program and pursuant to the authority granted to the Historical Commission to “formulate and implement a program for the observance of the historical aspects of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of the United States and of the first Constitution of this State” pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:9P-15, the Historical Commission is now accepting applications from local government units, nonprofit charitable organizations, civic organizations, and members of the public to request:

- The addition of a new State-owned historical marker on a proposed subject that contributes to the whole history of the American Revolution including its origins and the ways in which its Revolutionary ideals have impacted the state over the past 250 years.

## The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines

- The replacement of a previously erected state-owned historical marker that contributes to the whole history of the American Revolution including its origins and the ways in which its Revolutionary ideals have impacted the state over the past 250 years.
- New or replacement markers must relate to New Jersey history and connect to one or more of RevolutionNJ's themes:
  - Exclusion/Inclusion
  - Property and Sovereignty
  - Revolutionary Ideals
  - Political Participation
  - Movement of People
  - New Jersey as a “Battleground”
  - More information about these themes can be found in the [RevolutionNJ handbook](#).

This document will outline the process for submitting requests for a nomination for a new state-owned historical marker to be installed or to have a currently erected state-owned historical marker replaced. These guidelines do not apply to applications for markers associated with sites of historical and cultural significance unrelated to RevolutionNJ's commemorative themes.

### Payment for Markers on Privately-Owned Property

Please note that due to New Jersey laws NJSA 18a:73-25.5-8 and NJSA 18A:73-25.9-10, **public funds cannot be used to “erect markers or signs on private property.”** However, private organizations may fund their historical marker fabrication and installation themselves or identify external funding sources, and we will provide the information for our marker fabrication process. **The**

## **The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines**

**approximate cost of the fabricated marker is \$3,000.** Proof of liability insurance may be required prior to marker installation on private property. Approved private sites will be included on the New Jersey Historical Commission website as those organizations secure the funding for their historical marker. Privately-funded markers will undergo the same nomination process and follow the same design specifications as publicly-funded markers under the State Historical Marker Program. The fabrication and delivery of privately-funded markers will be administered by State Historical Marker Program staff.

### **Guidelines for Requests**

#### **Guidelines for submitting a request to replace a previously erected State-owned historical marker:**

- Submit a Marker Replacement Application.
- The nomination must clearly list the facts claimed in the historical marker text and the primary sources that verify the claims.
- The nomination must clearly demonstrate how the marker's subject connects to one or more of RevolutionNJ's commemorative themes.
- Applications must include photos of the condition of the marker on both sides if free-standing or one-side if wall-mounted.
- Applications must include the GPS coordinates of the marker's location. Instructions on how to do this can be found on the application form.
- Applicants are encouraged to provide a letter of support from the municipality or county where the replacement marker would be installed.
- The New Jersey Historical Commission reserves the right to audit the text of a repaired historical marker for accuracy and to amend marker texts accordingly.

## **The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines**

- The New Jersey Historical Commission reserves the right to adjust the location of the historical marker.

### **Guidelines for submitting a nomination for a new state-owned historical marker:**

- Submit a New Marker Application.
- The subject must connect to one or more of [RevolutionNJ's themes](#) commemorating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of the United States.
- The nomination of a location with a significant connection to an organization will be considered for panel deliberation if the organization played a key role in a historic event or movement connected to one of RevolutionNJ's commemorative themes as described above.
- Locations associated with individuals may be nominated based on significant contributions the individuals made to history and heritage in New Jersey and the country in relation to one of RevolutionNJ's commemorative themes as described above. This can include leadership or key roles in historic events. Nominations are not intended to be honorific, and therefore language used in marker text should be objective without qualifiers.
- Events that can serve as the basis for marker nominations may include, but are not limited to, pivotal moments in New Jersey's history if they are associated with significant milestones or movements connected to one of RevolutionNJ's commemorative themes as described above.
- Nominations of churches and cemeteries must also be linked to specific participation in historic events, heritage, or activism connected to one of RevolutionNJ's commemorative themes as described above to be considered.
- Innovations may also be nominated for a state-owned marker if such innovation can be shown to have had a significant influence on the history of New Jersey.

## **The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines**

- The subject to be marked has a substantial connection to New Jersey.
- Historical markers cannot be approved for a living person. Subjects must have been deceased for a minimum of five (5) years. The significance of an individual's accomplishments must have had a measurable impact on history and sufficient time has elapsed to evaluate that impact based on credible documentation.
- People, places, events, and innovations already marked with existing monuments or markers may receive less favorable consideration for a historical marker.
- The nomination must clearly list the facts claimed in the historical marker text and the primary sources that verify the claims.
- Proposed marker titles can be no more than 50 characters.
- Proposed marker text can be no more than 605 characters.
- Applicants are encouraged to provide a letter of support from the municipality or county where the replacement marker would be installed.
- 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 for a historical marker. These places will not be summarily approved by NJHC for designation as the approval criteria for those designations are different. Nominations for these places are subject to all of the above criteria.

## **Evaluation Criteria for New Marker Requests**

*Substantiating the historic significance of a marker subject.*

1. Applicants must explain how the subject of the marker connects to one or more of [RevolutionNJ's themes](#) as described above and contributes to the whole history of the American

## **The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines**

Revolution including its origins and the ways in which its Revolutionary ideals have impacted the state over the past 250 years.

2. Applicants must state why the subject is significant and worthy of being recognized by the State of New Jersey. Significance may be local, regional, statewide, or national.
3. All information on a marker must be documented with primary sources with dates clearly shown. Secondary sources may be submitted as supplemental documentation.
4. Each fact included in the proposed marker text must be listed alongside its corresponding primary sources.
5. *Examples of Sources*

### **Primary evidence examples might include:**

- Original official records and sworn affidavits based on eyewitness accounts.
- Diaries, journals, and autobiographies.
- Authenticated narrative accounts by eyewitnesses to the event (oral histories).
- Newspapers from the period.

### **Secondary evidence examples might include:**

- Accounts derived from interviews with eyewitnesses to the event and primary sources.
- Newspapers not from the period describing the event.
- Documented biographies and local histories.

## **The Review Process**

- NJHC staff will review applications to ensure completeness and that additional clarification is not needed. See “Application Package” below for a description of the application requirements.

## **The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines**

- Staff will review submitted applications within three months of the submission date and make recommendations to the Advisory Committee for its approval. After approval by the Advisory Committee, the recommendations will be submitted to the New Jersey Historical Commission for a final vote pending approval from the appropriate entity for installation.
- Applicants that are approved will be notified via email with instructions regarding finalization of marker text and proposed timelines for ordering, delivery, and installation.
- When applicants are notified of approval, they must contact any relevant government authority—municipality, county, state, or federal—to find out if they will assist in installing the marker.
- Applicants that are not accepted will be notified via email. If the nominator requests feedback, a staff member will share decision criteria and recommendations for resubmission.
- The Advisory Committee is composed of members with expertise in history and preservation reflective of the diversity of our state’s broader population.
- Due to funding restrictions, only 50 markers can be funded as part of the 250<sup>th</sup> initiative. If more than 50 nominations are received, the Advisory Committee will select 50 markers for priority funding status. Priority status will be determined by the strength of historical research detailed in the nomination, geographical diversity needs, and topical gaps in the State’s current historical marker landscape.
- The recommendations of the Advisory Committee will be forwarded to the New Jersey Historical Commission for final decision. Final approval will be voted on in a public session.

### **Application Package**

**Only complete applications will be reviewed. The link to the application can be found on the NJHC website on the [Historical Markers](#) page at [history.nj.gov](http://history.nj.gov). Please note that due to the**

## The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines

**volume of submissions we will only review completed applications. A complete application will consist of the following elements:**

1. **Significance of Subject** – Briefly state why the proposed subject is significant and worthy of being recognized by the State of New Jersey as part of the 250<sup>th</sup> commemoration.
2. **Connection to RevolutionNJ theme(s)** – Identify which RevolutionNJ theme(s) the proposed marker represents and provide a short explanation.
3. **Proposed marker text up to 605 characters** that provides a concise summary of the marker subject, specifying the historical significance, why the subject will be meaningful and educational for the public, as well as how and why the subject had a lasting impact over time. Please note that the final text will be drafted by the New Jersey Historical Commission staff in collaboration with the nominator. Proposed marker text should include:
  - a. Name of the site or period of historical significance.
  - b. One or two elements of historical significance that support the recognition of the site.
4. **A documentation summary** that lists all of the facts included in the marker text and the corresponding primary and secondary sources that verify each fact. If possible, attach copies of the primary sources to the application as additional pages. Secondary sources may be submitted as supplemental documentation.
5. **The proposed location of the marker plotted on a map.** Maps can be created with GIS software, or by using a screenshot from an online program such as Google Maps to mark the proposed location. For additional instructions, visit:  
<https://nj.gov/state/historical/assets/pdf/african-american/guide-for-plotting-marker-location-on-maps.pdf>

## **The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines**

6. **Up to five recent photographs of the proposed location** that provide an overview of the area and demonstrate that the location is visible and accessible to the public.
7. **New Jersey Historical Markers Program Property Owner Agreement** signed by the property owner if proposed site is on private property.
  - a. Applicants should consult the zoning official from the municipality and county of the proposed location to ensure there are no limitations regarding signage in the proposed location if on public land. A letter of support from the appropriate municipality or county is encouraged.

### **Acceptance and Installation**

If the nomination is approved, the nominator will receive an electronic approval letter. The final design of the marker, including the text describing the site and its significance, shall be determined by the NJHC, and all markers erected shall comport with the design as determined by the NJHC. The NJHC will order and manage the fabrication of approved markers. All paperwork must be completed prior to installation of the marker. A signed New Jersey Historical Markers Program Property Owner Agreement form will be required prior to the installment of any marker whether on public or private property. The nominator and the New Jersey Historical Commission staff will work together on planning the installation of the sign at the site.

### **Repair and Replacement**

The New Jersey Historical Commission will manage the repair and replacement of State-owned markers on State-owned property as funding is available. Nominating agencies will be responsible for monitoring

## **The New Jersey State Historical Marker Guidelines**

and advising on any changes, or damages to the marker they nominated. Markers, whether on public or private property, may not be transported, altered, or removed without written permission of the New Jersey Historical Commission.