

OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER PROCEDURES

Adopted by the Texas Historical Commission October 27, 2011

Official Texas Historical Markers are those markers and plaques the Texas Historical Commission (THC) awards, approves or administers. They include centennial markers the State of Texas awarded in the 1930s; Civil War Centennial markers from the 1960s; and medallions and markers awarded by the THC's predecessor, the Texas State Historical Survey Committee.

Historical marker application means a current version of the THC's *Official Texas Historical Marker Application Form* and all required supporting documentation as required in the Application Requirements (see below).

TYPES OF HISTORICAL MARKERS

A. Subject Markers

Definition: Subject markers are educational in nature and reveal aspects of local history that are important to a community or region. These markers honor topics such as church congregations, schools, communities, businesses, events and individuals. Subject markers are placed at sites that have a historical association with the topic, but no legal restriction is placed on the use of the property or site, although the THC must be notified if the marker is ever to be relocated.

Criteria:

1. **Age:** Most topics marked with *subject markers* must date back at least 50 years, although historic events may be marked after 30 years, and individuals may be marked, or may be mentioned in a historical marker text, after they have been deceased for 10 years. The THC may waive the age requirements for topics of overwhelming state or national importance, although these exceptions are rarely granted and the burden of proof for all claims and documentation is the responsibility of the author of the narrative history.
2. **Historical significance:** A topic is considered to have historical significance if it had influence, effect or impact on the course of history or cultural development; age alone does not determine significance. Topics do not necessarily have to be of statewide or national significance; many historical markers deal with local history and a local level of significance. Age alone is not sufficient for marker eligibility.

B. Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Markers

Definition: Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) markers are awarded to structures deemed worthy of preservation for their historical associations and architectural significance. RTHL is a legal designation and comes with a measure of protection; it is the highest honor the state can bestow on a historic structure, and the designation is required for this type of marker. The RTHL designation becomes effective upon approval by the THC. Official Texas Historical Markers signify the RTHL designation; designation comes only through application to and approval by the THC and must include public display of an Official Texas Historical Marker. Owners of RTHL-designated structures must give the THC 60 days written notice before any alterations are made to the exterior

of the structure. RTHL status is a permanent designation and is not to be removed from the property in the event of a transfer of ownership. Only the THC can remove the designation or recall the marker. The marker must remain with the structure and may not be removed or displayed elsewhere until or unless the THC gives express approval in writing for such action. Once designated as RTHL, properties are subject to provisions of Texas Government Code, Section 442.006(f).

Criteria:

1. **Age:** Structures eligible for the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark designation and marker must be at least 50 years old.
2. **Historical significance:** Architectural significance alone is not enough to qualify a structure for the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark designation. It must have an equally significant historical association, and that association can come through an event that occurred at the site, through individuals who owned or lived on the property, or, in the case of bridges, industrial plants, schoolhouses, and other non-residential properties, through documented significance to the larger community.
3. **Architectural significance:** Structures deemed architecturally significant are outstanding examples of architectural history, either through design, materials, structural type or construction methods. In all cases, eligible architectural properties must display integrity, i.e., the structure should be in a good state of repair, maintain its appearance from its period of significance and be considered an exemplary model of preservation. Architectural significance is often best determined by the relevance of the property to broader contexts, including geography. Any changes over the years should be compatible with original design and reflect compliance with accepted preservation practices, e.g., the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.
4. **Good state of repair:** Structures not considered by the THC to be in a good state of repair — i.e. restored — are not eligible for RTHL designation. The THC reserves the sole right to make that determination relative to eligibility for RTHL markers.

Special considerations for RTHL marker applications: If a structure is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under either Criterion A or B **and** Criterion C (architecture), the historical text compiled as part of the National Register process may be submitted as part of the marker process, provided it includes the required reference notes and other documentation. Acceptance of the National Register information for the purposes of the marker process will be the sole determination of the THC. Listing in the NRHP does not guarantee approval for an RTHL marker.

C. Historic Texas Cemetery Markers

Definition: Historic Texas Cemetery (HTC) markers are only for burial grounds previously approved for HTC designation. These markers recognize the historical significance of a cemetery and, with the use of interpretive plaques, provide background on associated communities, families, events and customs. HTC markers must be placed at the cemetery, but since cemeteries are protected under other existing laws, they convey no restrictions on the property.

Criteria:

1. **HTC designation:** All steps of the HTC designation process must be completed by the time of application for the HTC marker.
2. **Historical/cultural significance:** Completion of the HTC designation does not ensure approval for an HTC marker; it is only a prerequisite. The application for an HTC marker with an interpretive plaque must include the same type of detailed history required for other markers. In addition to the context, overview and significance sections, it must also include a section that

provides a detailed physical description of the site that includes mention of the cemetery setting, and descriptions of significant landscape features or noteworthy burial markers and funereal practices.

Special considerations for HTC markers:

- HTC medallions can be ordered separately, but only for placement with a previously awarded THC subject marker or other plaque that provides interpretation for the cemetery. **NOTE: Under current rules, cemeteries are no longer eligible for subject markers.**
- HTC medallions and interpretive plaques (including name and date plaques) must be displayed together.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Only complete marker application packets that contain all the required elements can be accepted or processed. Incomplete applications will automatically be rejected. Any individual, group or county historical commission may apply to the THC for an Official Texas Historical Marker. The application shall include:

1. A completed application form duly reviewed and approved by the county historical commission (CHC) in the county in which the marker will be placed.
2. Application and text must be in the form of Word or Word-compatible documents.
3. Required font style and type size are a Times variant and 12 point.
4. Narrative histories must be typed in a double-spaced format and include separate sections on context, overview and significance.
5. The narrative history must include documentation in the form of reference notes, which can be either footnotes or endnotes. Documentation associated with applications should be broad-based and demonstrate a survey of all available resources, both primary and secondary.
6. Immediately upon notification of the successful preliminary review of required elements by the THC, a non-refundable application fee of \$100 is required. The fee can be submitted to the THC within ten working days of application receipt notification.

Additional requirements for Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers:

7. Legal description of the property.
8. A detailed floor plan for each floor of the structure, if a residence or building. The floor plan must include notations on the use of the room (bedroom, parlor, etc.) and on where changes have been made over the years (i.e. back porch added 1924). Floor plans can be sent separately to the THC, provided they are on letter-size paper and include the required notations. Incomplete floor plans will not be accepted.
9. A detailed site plan of the property, showing all major features, such as outbuildings, sidewalks, driveways, significant landscape features, etc.
10. At least one historic photograph of the structure.
11. One current photograph of each elevation of the structure.

Additional requirements for Historic Texas Cemetery markers:

12. Prior approval by the THC for the Historic Texas Cemetery designation is required. Note that the designation process must be complete by the time the marker application is submitted to the CHC and that the HTC designation does not guarantee approval for an Official Texas Historical Marker.

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

1. Potential sponsor checks the THC web site for current basic information on the Official Texas Historical Marker Program.
2. Sponsor contacts the CHC to obtain marker application form, to review basic program requirements and to discuss county's review process and procedures, which differs from county to county. The THC does not mandate a specific review process at the county level, so the sponsor will need to work closely with the CHC to be sure all local concerns and procedures are addressed properly. The CHCs cannot send the application forward until they can certify that the history and the application have been adequately reviewed.
3. CHC reviews the marker application for accuracy and significance, and either approves the application or works with the sponsor to develop additional information as necessary.
4. CHC-approved applications are forwarded online as a Word document to the History Programs Division of the THC. Once the application is received by the THC, additional notifications and correspondence will be between the CHC contact and the THC staff contact only, unless otherwise noted.
5. THC staff makes a preliminary assessment to determine if the topic is eligible for review and if all required elements are included. Upon notification the application has been accepted for review, a \$100 application fee is due within ten days.
6. Eligible applications receive further review, and additional information may be requested via email. Failure to provide all requested materials as instructed in 45 days, unless special conditions are approved by the THC, will result in cancellation of the application.
7. THC staff and commissioners review applications and determine:
 - a. Eligibility for approval
 - b. Size and type of marker for each topic
 - c. Priorities for work schedule on the approved applications
8. CHC and sponsor notified via email of approval and provided payment form; payment must be received in THC offices within 45 days or the application will be cancelled.
9. Inscriptions written, with one review copy provided via email to the CHC contact only for local distribution as needed. Inscription review is for accuracy of content only; the THC determines the content, wording, punctuation, phrasing, etc.
10. Upon receipt of the inscription, the CHC contact provides additional copies as necessary for committee, commission or sponsor review and conveys a single response to the THC.
 - a. Upon receipt of emailed approval by the CHC, the THC proceeds with the order.
 - b. If warranted changes recommended by the CHC are approved by the THC, staff will send a revised copy for content review. Because inscription reviews are for content only, only two reviews should be necessary to complete this step of the process. Additional requests for revisions are subject to approval by the THC, which will be the sole determinant of warranted requests for changes. Excessive requests for change, or delays in response, may, in the determination of the THC, result in cancellation of the order.
 - c. Only the authorized CHC contact — chair or marker chair — can make the final approval of inscriptions at the county level. Final approval will be construed by the THC to mean concurrence with any interested parties, including the sponsor.
11. The order is sent to marker supplier for manufacturing. Subject to the terms of the THC vendor contract, only authorized THC staff may contact the manufacturer relative to any aspect of Official Texas Historical Markers, including those in process or previously approved.
12. THC staff reviews galley proofs of markers. With THC approval, manufacturing process proceeds. Manufacturer inspects, crates and ships completed markers and notifies THC, which in turn notifies CHC contact.

13. With shipment notice, planning can begin on marker dedication ceremony, as needed, in conjunction with CHC, sponsors and other interested parties.
 - a. Information on planning and conducting marker ceremonies is provided by the THC through its web site.
 - b. Once the planning is complete, the CHC posts the information to the THC web site calendar.
14. THC staff enters marker information into the Texas Historic Sites Atlas (atlas.thc.state.tx.us), an online inventory of marker information and inscriptions.