



# **POLK COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION HISTORICAL MARKER GUIDELINES**

**Adopted May 23, 2019**

The purpose of the Polk County Historical Marker program is to recognize and encourage the preservation of local history. Historical markers are popular and useful tools for promoting and preserving all aspects of Polk County's diverse heritage. Marker topics include persons, events, institutions, buildings, ethnic groups, churches, sites, communities and cemeteries. Historical markers educate the public about Florida history and spark interest in preserving local history. When properly promoted, they can also boost tourism.

## **1. History**

In 1937, the State of Florida created the Polk County Historical Commission. The Commission serves as a volunteer advisory commission to the Polk County Board of County Commissioners and to the staff of the Polk County History Center. By law the Historical Commission may, upon its own initiative or upon petition of municipalities or historical societies, mark by proper monuments, tablets or markers the location of forts or other places within Polk County where historical events have transpired. Other interested parties may request that the Historical Commission act upon its own initiative to mark such locations. All such petitions or requests must be submitted in accordance with these guidelines.

## **2. Sponsors**

Marker applications may be sponsored by organizations or individuals. Markers will be designated under the following two categories: a.) Subject, and b.) Structure. The criteria for these categories are described below. Sponsor organizations may include, for example: historical societies, churches, schools, businesses, or government entities. Sponsor organizations may apply for a marker to be located on public or private property. Sponsor individuals may only apply for a marker to be located on private property.

## **3. Categories of Markers**

### **a. Subjects:**

Subject markers are educational in nature and record aspects of local history that are important to a community. These markers honor topics such as church congregations, schools, communities, businesses, events and individuals. A subject marker is placed at a site that has historical significance, and is accessible to the public. Most topics marked with subject markers must date back at least 50 years, although historic events may be marked after 30 years. Markers that honor individuals may be installed after the individual has been deceased for 10 years. Living individuals may be mentioned in the subject of a historical marker if deemed appropriate by the Historical Commission. The Historical Commission may also waive the age requirement for topics of overwhelming local or state importance, although these exceptions are rarely granted and the burden of proof is on the applicant.

### **b. Structures:**

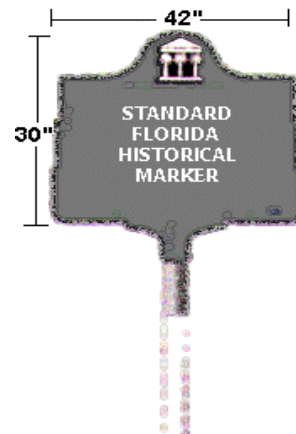
Structure markers are awarded to structures deemed worthy of preservation for their historical and architectural significance. Buildings or other historic structures may be eligible for designation upon reaching 50 years of age. In some cases, structures older than 50 years that have been altered may be eligible, if those alterations occurred at least 50 years ago and took place during a significant period of the structure's history. In reviewing applications for designation, the Historical Commission considers not only the historic persons or events associated with a structure, but also the architectural integrity of the building or structure. The structure should maintain its appearance from its period of historical significance and should be an exemplary model of preservation.

#### 4. Marker Types

Three marker types are available. While historic places and events have been marked in Polk with signs and monuments since at least the 1930s, markers approved by the Historical Commission have been placed in our county since 1956. The earliest official Historical Commission markers used the State Seal as an emblem, and were intended to be part of a statewide heritage trail. The State of Florida officially created an historic marker program in 1960. To ensure uniformity and quality, the goal of the Historical Commission's Marker Program is to continue to complement the statewide tradition of erecting markers in uniform style, content, and quality.

##### State of Florida Historical Marker

Marker applications that meet Florida state standards can be co-sponsored with the Historical Commission and Florida Department of State. When deemed appropriate the Historical Commission will partner with applicants in making requests for historical markers through the State of Florida Historical Marker Program. Marker applications must be approved by the State Historical Marker Council before markers are ordered. The Standard Florida State Historical Marker is 30" x 42" with a 7" concrete post. The standard marker allows 19 lines of text with approximately 1200 characters.



##### Polk County Historical Markers

In 2012, two new options were created to expand the ability to recognize local subjects, landmarks, events and individuals. The 2012 marker series uses the new Polk heritage landmark logo and also emphasizes continuity in overall size and appearance. The markers use a brown background and raised gold lettering recognized by cultural tourists across Florida. Applicants wishing to deviate from this specified appearance must pursue a marker through other means. Markers are one-piece cast aluminum with a separate post.



- (1) Large Polk County Historical Marker is the same size and shape as the State of Florida marker but with the Polk County Historical Commission's color scheme and logo at the top rather than the State of Florida's (3 palm trees) Current price ranges depending on the wording. Pole mounted.



- (2) Medium Polk County Historical Marker is 23" x 29" with a 2" post or on a structure. It allows 10 lines of text with approximately 640 characters of 1/2 inch letters.

- (3) Polk County Landmark Medallion is 12" round, and is designed to be mounted with a 2" post, or on a structure.



Fees for markers vary with the cost of materials at the time of manufacture.

## **5. Policies**

- a. The final approval of all marker applications is made by the Historical Commission, based on the evaluation of an application and a recommendation made by a Marker Committee appointed by the Historical Commission.
- b. The Polk County History Center acts as agent for the Historical Commission handling all administrative details relating to the marker program. These duties will include editing the marker texts, ordering the markers and arranging for delivery of the finished signs and posts. Because the Polk County History Center has the ultimate responsibility to preserve historical accuracy and promote interpretative content based on appropriate research, the staff of the Polk County History Center is tasked with the final editing and review of historical marker texts.
- c. Expense of the marker erection is the responsibility of the sponsoring organization or individual requesting the marker.
- d. The Polk County Historical Marker Program, as administered by the Polk County Historical Commission and History Center, requires that individual and organization sponsors pay 100% of marker costs. In addition, an application fee supports the History Center's administrative costs and support of the program.
- e. Sponsors are responsible for the physical placement of a historical marker unless the site is on a state-maintained highway right-of-way, in which case the Florida Department of Transportation will be responsible for erecting the marker in consultation with the Polk County Historical Commission.
- f. Markers are the property of the County and may not be used for commercial advertising or be copied for the use of any other agency, association, corporation, or individual except with written permission from the Historical Commission.
- g. Once a marker is installed, the County shall maintain the marker. The County's maintenance obligations are contingent upon the property owner's grant of an easement or other non-revocable right to enter the property to do so.
- h. Upon installation of a marker upon a State right of way or County right of way, the marker will, as applicable, become the property of the State or the County.
- i. If an error is found on a marker after it is cast, and if this error is the fault of the sponsoring organization, then that party must pay for the necessary correction. The corrections must be made or the Historical Commission will not install the marker. The marker company guarantees its work and will replace or correct a marker if an error is made by them. The Historical Commission will not be held responsible for any errors that are found on a marker.
- j. The name of the sponsors will be followed by that of the Polk County Historical Commission at the bottom of each marker. No more than four sponsor names may appear on any marker.
- k. Polk County Historical Markers are separate from the federal inventory of historic properties (the National Register of Historic Places) and State of Florida historical marker program. Application for (or the approval of) a Polk County Historical Marker does not constitute a nomination to the State or National Register. More information about both programs is available through the Polk County Historical Commission.
- l. The Historical Commission shall withdraw the marker designation and may repossess any marker if it is determined by the Historical Commission that a site has lost its historical significance, integrity, public access or upon the request of the owner of the property where the marker has been placed.

## **6. The Historical Marker Application**

- a. The Historical Commission has the authority to accept or reject subjects or structures proposed for a marker. The Polk County History Center has final editorial control over the text on each marker. The applicant is responsible for providing research and history of the topic, and for filling out the application and submitting the application with supporting documentation to the Historical Commission for review and approval.
- b. The marker applicant must establish historical significance through a documented narrative history of the topic. A topic has historical significance influenced, effected or impacted the course of history or cultural development. Age alone does not determine historical significance. To determine historical significance, an applicant must fully answer such questions as: How did the topic play a role in local history? Why has it made a difference in the context of local or state history? Who were the individuals involved in the history of the topic? What other events were taking place at the same time (locally, regionally or nationally) that may have had a bearing on how or why the topic was important?
- c. The text of the marker presented with the application must be prepared with the same care and technique as a well-written research or term paper. Because the Polk County History Center and the Polk County Historical Commission strives for historical accuracy in the marker program, the subject must be thoroughly researched using primary and secondary sources. The use of oral tradition and unpublished histories without corroborating evidence is discouraged. The narrative must be documented on a fact-by-fact basis with the use of footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations that offer the source of each statement in the historical narrative that is presented as fact.
- d. All applications and supporting documents must be typed, with correct punctuation, etc., when submitted to the History Center office. Site plans are required for all applications and should clearly show the building or structure under consideration plus any outbuildings or other significant features such as landscaping, though professional blueprints are not required. Simple drawings are sufficient if necessary details are included, with particularly clear delineation of any alterations and/or additions and their dates.
- e. Permission for placement of an official Polk County Historical Marker must be granted by the property owner and must be signified on the application form. When markers are proposed to be placed on State-maintained right-of-way, the Historical Commission will obtain necessary permission from the Florida Department of Transportation. The placement of historical markers should be carefully considered to ensure accessibility and protection of historic resources. Visitors, whenever possible, should be able to safely walk up to the marker and read the text.
- f. Whenever possible, a marker for a landmark receiving the official Polk County Historic Marker designation should be placed on a post rather than on the structure.
- g. Sponsors are responsible for the physical placement of a historical marker unless the site is on a state-maintained highway right-of-way, in which case the Florida Department of Transportation will be responsible for erecting the marker in consultation with the Polk County Historical Commission.
- h. Only the application fee is required at the time of application. All materials submitted for official Polk County Markers become part of the permanent archival files of the Polk County Historical and Genealogical Library and may be used or cited in County publications.