

**CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO  
CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT**

ITEM # 1

---

**BY:** Jeff Hook, Senior Planner

**MEETING DATE:** December 17, 2007

**FROM:** Kim Murry, Deputy Director, Long Range Planning

**PROJECT ADDRESS:** Citywide

---

**SUBJECT:** Historic plaques for Contributing and Master List Historic Properties: Discussion of design and placement alternatives

**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

Discuss ideas for an historic plaque program for Contributing Properties and determine whether to proceed with a Contributing Properties Historic Plaque Program. If the Committee conceptually supports such a program it should: 1) provide conceptual direction to staff on historic plaque design and program features, and 2) direct staff to return with a program proposal, including plaque design, program features, implementation steps and approximate costs.

**BACKGROUND:**

**Situation**

At several meetings, CHC have expressed support for an historic plaque program for Contributing Properties. The City provides free historic plaques to owners of properties on the Master List of Historic Resources; however the City does not provide historic plaques or have an approved plaque design for Contributing Properties. Consequently, most Contributing historic properties are not outwardly identified as being a designated historic property, although some owners have installed historic plaques of their own design.

Former CHC member Dan Carpenter advocated historic plaques for Contributing Properties to: 1) raise community awareness of and pride in Contributing Properties and their neighborhoods, 2) ensure that historic plaques were designed and installed for clarity and consistency of appearance, 3) to provide an incentive for historic listing. Dan Carpenter presented information that he had gleaned from other cities regarding their historic plaque programs. That information is attached. Key questions raised include:

1. Are historic plaques warranted for Contributing Properties, given varying levels of maintenance and significance?
2. If the CHC believes providing historic plaques for Contributing Properties is a good idea, what should the plaques look like? How should they be differentiated from the Master List properties' plaques?
3. There are about 550 Contributing Properties – most within five historical districts (compared with 175 Master List Properties). Providing signage for this many properties is a substantial undertaking and may involve significant planning and cost.

4. Should the City consider providing the plaques at no or reduced cost? Master List plaques, consisting of a 6" X 11 1/2" X 1/8" aluminum oval with painted and press-on graphics cost the City about \$70 each. One option would be for the City to adopt a plaque design and display guidelines. Owners of qualifying historic properties could then purchase and install the plaques on their own.

### **Previous Review**

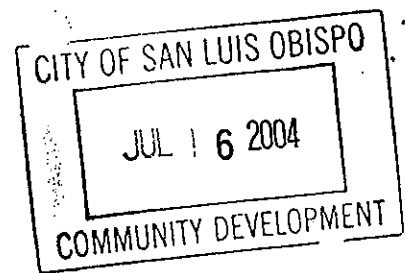
At its October 2005 meeting, Committee members discussed a report submitted by Dan Carpenter, 2030 Johnson Avenue, describing historical plaque programs in several other California cities. Staff described the City of San Luis Obispo's historic plaque program and its history. Committee members noted that less than one-half of the City's Master List Historic properties had requested plaques despite being offered them for free, and felt that a higher quality, more attractive historical plaque may increase property interest in the program (we've since distributed 40 first-time plaques for Master List properties). On a motion by Committee member Crotser, seconded by Committee member Baer, the Committee asked staff to contact additional historical plaque providers on design alternatives and costs, to prepare a letter to City and County departments offering historical plaques for publicly-owned historic buildings (e.g. City Hall), and to contact the City's current plaque provider (Frank Linson Signs in San Luis Obispo) to determine how many preprinted sign "blanks" are available and current plaque costs.

Staff has discussed options with Linson Signs, and staff will provide additional details at the meeting.

### **Attachments:**

1. Letter from Dan Carpenter summarizing results of survey
2. Technical leaflet on establishing a historic plaque program
3. City of San Luis Obispo historic plaque

Attachment 1



July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004

To: Cultural Heritage Committee

From: Dan Carpenter

Re: Findings of Plaque Programs for other Cities

On June 28<sup>th</sup>, the CHC asked me to search for other cities that have plaque programs and report back to the committee on my findings.

The following cities were contacted either by email or phone. The criteria used for the selection of California cities, was that the city had to have Mills Act Contract. The out of state cities were random. All cities were explained our two level system of resources and plaque distribution criteria. All were asked if they had a plaque program and if so, to give details. The following, are the cities used in the survey.

They are: Berkeley, Danville, Glendora, Redondo Beach, Laguna Beach, Sacramento, Colton, Rancho Cucamonga, La Mesa, Chula Vista, Long Beach, Palo Alto, San Jose, Sunnyvale, Benicia, Vallejo, Santa Barbara, Monterey, Pasadena, Santa Monica, Los Gatos, Escondido, and four out of state, Ashland, OR, Lake Oswego, OR, Alexandria, VA., Durham County, NC. Of the 26 contacted, 14 responded. Some responses were vague and therefore had to have my interpretation. Some information received from the email contact differed from what was posted on their webpage, and thus had to be meshed together and facts used were based on which city official responded to my request.

Having said all of that, these are my findings:

Redondo Beach: Currently does not have a program. Owner (of historic property), may purchase their own plaque and the city supports that. There is no standard for design and no funding by the city. Dwelling must be 50 years old.

Sacramento: Does not have a program. One historical neighborhood uses pole signs that are installed by the city and funded by the owners.

Santa Barbara: Currently does not have a program. Owners can purchase their own sign with the Historic Preservation Committee's approval of design and size.

Pasadena: Currently does not have a program. 15 years ago they came up with a plaque program. Gave out approx. 50 plaques. Some buildings are still displaying them. Are considering a new program and would be interested in seeing what we come up with.

Santa Monica: No program.

Laguna Beach: They have recently combined two inventory lists of historic resources to form one "Laguna Beach Historic Register". They have three levels of historical resources in the city. "E" Exceptional- These are considered to be outstanding and/or unique historical architectural examples and could be eligible for the National Historical Register. There are very few of these. "K" Key-These represent very good historical architectural examples and have significant architectural, historical and/or aesthetic value. Most properties are these. "C" Contributor- These properties contribute to the overall character and history of the neighborhood, even though they may not be architecturally unique. All levels at least 50 years old and are voluntary participation. They have to be on one of the lists to be eligible to buy a plaque. They have one plaque for all levels of historic resources. They must be bought by the owner from Eric Landmark Company. The cost is about \$125. Their current program is fairly new so the interest is very high. They didn't have any current numbers of how many are in the program.

La Mesa: They currently have a plaque program. They have one level and issue a plaque from the city so that all are consistent. Historic Preservation Committee determines eligibility. Plaques cost about \$100 and are paid for by the city. They use the "Eric Landmark Company" for their supplier of bronze oval plaques.

Ashland,OR- Has a list of Historic Resources but only use the National Registry and State Historic Preservation Office for identifying their properties of historical value. The owner can work through either

organization to acquire a plaque. The city does not have a program for these buildings.

Lake Oswego, OR: This is their first year of a plaque program. They have one level and also issue from the city a bronze plaque. They use the historic name and the year it was built. Plaque supplied by Erie Landmark Company.

Long Beach: Currently does not have a plaque program.

Benicia: Does not have a plaque program. They do have "Historical Markers" that are placed in "City Row" in the center of town to list the properties that are significantly historical. The historical society pays for them and the installation.

Escondido: I talked to their Historical Society Coordinator and found that they have two levels of historical value. The first is "Landmark". They only have 8 properties on this. They are larger landmarks that are very old and typically recognizable by most all of the community. The second level is their "Regular" level. They have almost 300 properties on this list. They use the exact same wording for both levels, but make the Landmark a bit larger than the regular. I thought they had an interesting idea about not putting the name on the plaque. They don't because they've been challenged from some historical buffs that the name on the plaque is not the original owner, and therefore should not be included on the plaque. They say it is confusing to the walking tours to figure out if the name is just a significant name to the city, or the original owner and builder of the house. They use Erie Landmark Company for their bronze plaque. They have three lines on the oval plaque. First: City of Escondido; Second and larger: Year built; Third: Local Historic Register. All signs are consistent and no confusion. Cost of the plaque is \$100 which is paid for by the Historical Society which receives its funds from the City Council. The approval comes from the Historic Preservation Committee. Program is voluntary.

Durham County, NC: I included this city because I thought they offered something a little different than most of what I had been seeing. They have two levels of historical resources. Residential and Commercial. The Residential plaques list the name of the house and the year constructed. The Commercial list a brief history and year of the building. They only use resources that are at least 75 years old and have some historical value which

is maintained by the Historical Preservation Committee. Each plaque is easily noticeable as either a residential or commercial. Cost to each owner is about \$250.

Alexandria, VA: The historic preservation society provides a plaque to each property on their historical list. They only have one level of value and they issue the same oval, bronze plaque for each property. The society pays for the plaque which is purchased from Eric Landmark Company.

---

I talked to Erie Landmark Company about how the cities and organizations fund these signs that they sell to them. They say it is about equally split as to how many cities give theirs away and how many charge the owner. Most all of the cities I communicated with use Erie Landmark Company. They will work very closely with the city to establish a logo for consistency and have many ideas for establishing the identity that cities are looking for and property owners are willing to pay for an put up on their properties.

Consistency: What I hear from most cities is that consistency is the major factor in accomplishing their goals. The realization that seeing the same thing and often will bring familiarity.

Style: Most cities that are using plaques are using the bronze metal type that are in the brochure that is enclosed with this report. It is oval with three lines and the date is always included and highlighted.

Cost: The cost seems to vary between \$100 and \$150 depending on the style recommended. It was very obvious that committees who made plaques available were committees that ended up paying for the plaques. This was consistent with the cities desire to have a uniform look in the city. The fear was a mix of plaques not suggesting any conformity to people who are looking for specific historic sites.

Designation: I find that most who had plaque programs only had one level or were trying to work to one level of buildings. What I read from this is that the more plaques that were out in the community, the message that the city is a historical community would be very obvious.


Value: The value to having a good plaque program is tremendous in supporting our historic resources. A quality looking plaque would not only imply a value in the resource, but also in the direction of the city.

Conclusion: My goal in this project was to find a way to have all historical properties use some type of plaque to properly identify their value to the city. At the same time, use just enough differentiation to properly and respectfully identify those Master List Properties. All plaques should be consistently located on the property to readily identify. I think it's interesting to note that none of the programs I looked at were mandatory and all owners were encouraged to participate for the benefit of the city as a whole. My finding is that a plaque program is essential for the city of San Luis Obispo. Identifying our resources is a high priority and I feel we should be inclusive as much as we can and be consistent with what we attach to the buildings.

I am in favor of switching to a bronze plaque. The bronze oval plaque is more durable and easier to keep clean than the current white plaques. The bronze signifies value which might be more attractive to owners. After reviewing what most cities do, I would suggest we offer both Master and Contributing properties a similar plaque. I would use the same idea as Escondido and use a somewhat larger size for the Master Properties. I like the idea of using a somewhat different plaque for commercial so that residential can be differentiated. As far as whom pays for these plaques, there are many ways of go about this. When you offer a quality plaque, I believe the property owner will step up and pay for it. I think the timing is good to make a change in the plaques we offer. As owners are presented with a new design and plaque, I would think that would trigger a new group of owners that would buy into the program. I would ask that the owner pay for the new plaque. I would discontinue the use of the white plaque that is now in use. I would offer the Master List Properties a 50% discount on the new plaques. Contributing would pay the full amount. Essentially, the cost to the city is about the same as it is now. Master List Properties would begin to pay half the cost which is about what the city is paying for the current white plaques. Of course, there would be no city money spent on the Contributing Properties. A possible alternative is charging the Contributing Properties enough extra so that Master Properties would continue to be free. Another alternative, some organizations do fundraisers for these types of things. This is a possibility, but probably not likely. Personally, I think when the owner has spent their own money on these plaques; they are more likely to take ownership, more pride and upkeep when putting the plaque

into use. There are many other possible ways of paying for these and I welcome any suggestions on your part.

Thanks for letting me offer you this information. If you would like me to supply any further information, I would be happy to do so as time allows me. If you'd like me to come to a meeting to explain my ideas further, I am also available. I am enclosing the folder that Eric Landmark Company has sent direct to me for your review. I will follow up later if desired.

Sincerely,  
Dan Carpenter   
2030 Johnson Ave.  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
Email [dancarp54@earthlink.net](mailto:dancarp54@earthlink.net)  
543-5211

# Technical Leaflet

Technical Information Service

American Association for State and Local History

## Establishing a Plaque Program: Bringing Local History to the Community

by Richard Bamberger

Local and state historical societies almost always are searching for new and innovative ways to enhance the historical awareness of members of their communities. Plaque programs provide one of the most effective and least expensive ways of bringing history "to the streets." A plaque program, organized and administered by a historical society, involves the recognition and landmarking of local historic properties through the use of plaques typically purchased by the owners of these properties. In recent years, an increasing number of historical societies have established such programs, often as a means of enhancing community outreach and historical awareness.

### Program Start-Up

In establishing a plaque program a historical society must: a) determine the goals and objectives of the program; b) select the type of program most likely to permit the fulfillment of these objectives; and c) set the criteria for inclusion in the plaque program.

*Richard Bamberger is the founder and director of the Erie Landmark Company established in 1986.*

### Establishing Program Goals and Objectives

Historical societies tend to organize plaque programs for any number of reasons, but most typically, these reasons include:

- *Membership.* Plaque programs allow a historical society a means by which it can expand its outreach and membership. For building and home owners who may not be members of or active in a historical society but who are, nevertheless, interested in local history and historic preservation, participation in a plaque program often serves as the first step toward more active involvement.

- *Education.* Marking a substantial number of buildings in a given district or a neighborhood provides a graphic image of the history of that area. As such, the historical society may find itself better able to bring history directly to those it was previously unable to reach—uninvolved residents, visitors, or tourists.

- *Preservation and Rehabilitation.* Although a plaque program itself does not necessarily imply the recognition of buildings as historic sites, the guidelines by which a building is accepted into the program may serve to encourage building owners to rehabilitate and maintain their historic structures.

• *Fund Raising.* A plaque program has the potential to be a fund raiser for the sponsoring organization. Some dealers are even willing to sell plaques to historical societies at wholesale prices. The historical society may, in turn, either pass these discounts on to the building owner or use the discount for their own fund raising purposes.

Certainly, these are not the only reasons historical societies establish plaque programs. Whatever the reason, it is crucial that the objectives of the program be established ahead of time and that there be a consensus reached on the objectives. Ideally, the form which the program takes should be dependent entirely upon the goals selected.

### Selecting Appropriate Program Form

In determining the type of program able to meet the objectives set out for it, the historical society must make two basic decisions. First, on the basis of the program objectives, the historical society must choose between two overall types of programs, interpretive and recognition. An interpretive program involves the landmarking of historic sites using markers with customized wording describing the specific structure or district. For example, as shown in Fig. 1, such plaques may provide a bit of the history of a specific site. If the primary program objective is community education, this type of program would be most appropriate. Furthermore, a plaque program of this sort can be used as a basis for a walking tour.

Roadside markers are a special type of interpretive markers. Larger (and more expensive) than the usual interpretive plaque, roadside markers permit the communication of more detailed information. Typically, these are mounted on a post adjacent to the historic site, unlike plaques, which are mounted on the wall of a building. (See Fig. 2.)

If the objective of the program is either outreach and membership or preservation and rehabilitation, a recognition program may be more suitable. Recognition plaques also tend to be less expensive since they have little or no customized wording. The National Register plaque (see Fig. 3), used for recognition, usually is inscribed with the following wording: "This property has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior." A more sophisticated (and expensive) plaque includes the name of the building, restorer, construction date, or reference number (such as indicating a description in a guide

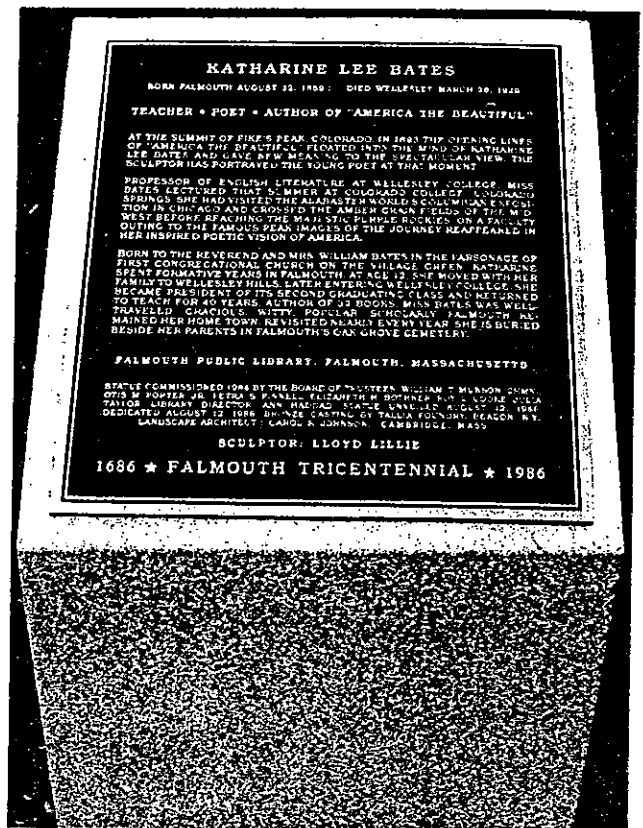


Fig. 1. This interpretive marker uses customized wording. Photograph courtesy of Erie Landmark Company.

book) printed either below or above the standard wording.

Secondly, the historical society must decide whether or not it wants a consistent plaque format or whether the selection of the format will be left up to the individual purchaser. If one of the objectives of the program is to increase community awareness of the activities of the historical society, then it may be important that all plaques ordered through the program are of a consistent format. Typically, it is in the historical society's interest to ensure that, regardless of whether the program is of the interpretive or recognition type, all plaques have some sort of logo or the name of the historical society placed at the top or bottom of each plaque. (See Figs. 4 and 5.) Some historical societies, however, go beyond this and determine exact plaque specifications, i.e., the material used, shape of the plaques, and wording permitted.

For the historical society adopting a program with a set plaque format, i.e., with more than just the name of the historical society at the top or bottom, there are a number of alternatives regarding the

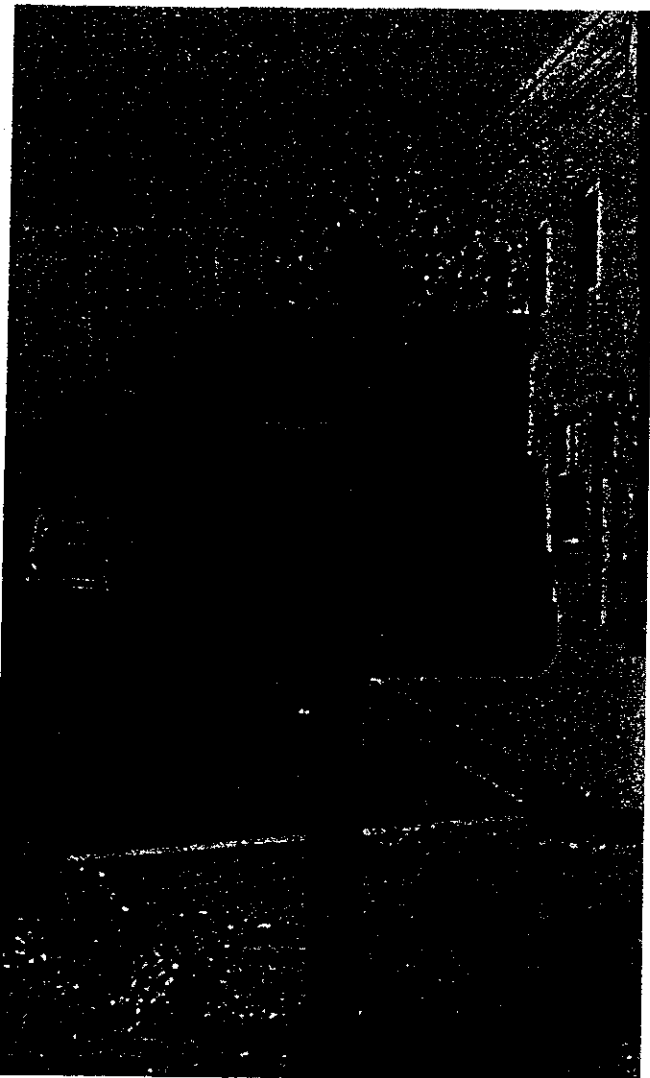


Fig. 2. Mounted on the site of a row of buildings that burned down in 1900, this attractive marker provides information, as well as an etched bronze photo reproduction of the site before the fire. *Photo courtesy of the City of Prescott, Arizona.*

manner in which the plaque is fabricated and its shape and size:

1. **Mode of Fabrication:** Plaques are fabricated in one of three ways: metal casting, wood processing, or metal processing.

- **Metal Casting.** Plaques fabricated in this method are usually made from either bronze, aluminum, or iron. All three must be cast in a foundry; however, not all foundries are alike. Depending on the equipment and casting process used by a foundry, the price of a cast plaque can vary greatly. Furthermore, there are advantages and disadvantages for each

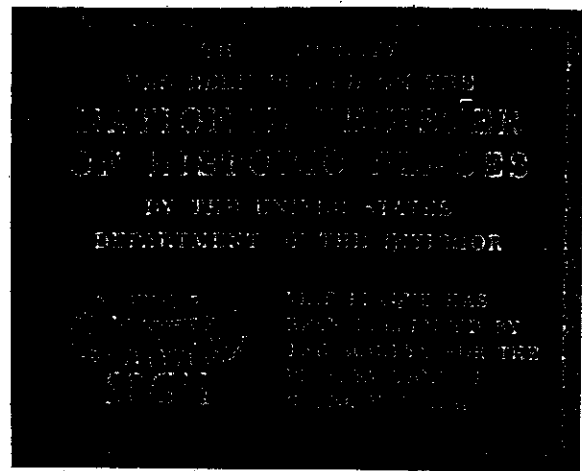


Fig. 3. A customized National Register plaque, this one has a logo as well as information about the plaque donor. *Photo courtesy of Erie Landmark Company.*

type of material. Iron, while the least expensive, is heavy and has an uninteresting natural color. Aluminum, while typically priced in the middle range, looks less expensive and may corrode over time. Bronze, while the most expensive, looks more dignified and lasts longer.

- **Wood Processing.** Plaques fabricated out of wood may either be carved or painted. Many historical societies have chosen wooden plaques as the most appropriate for those neighborhoods with a large proportion of wood frame houses. Furthermore, these plaques often can be obtained locally. However, while these plaques are among the least expensive, they tend to weather poorly and typically must be replaced every two to five years, depending on the environment.

- **Metal Processing.** Plaques processed onto metal, as opposed to plaques cast out of metal, are the least expensive. For the historical society considering this mode of fabrication, there are two choices, metal photo and screen processing. In the case of the former, text and photograph are embedded in photosensitized aluminum. In the case of the latter, text and photo are essentially painted onto the surface of the metal. Metal photo offers a number of advantages since it is the least expensive to produce and provides the clearest image reproduction (see Fig. 6), which is ideal if the historical society wishes to incorporate into the plaque an old fashioned-looking, tintype photo of a structure that once stood on a site. However, these plaques can be damaged if vandals use a sharp object, and they can only be

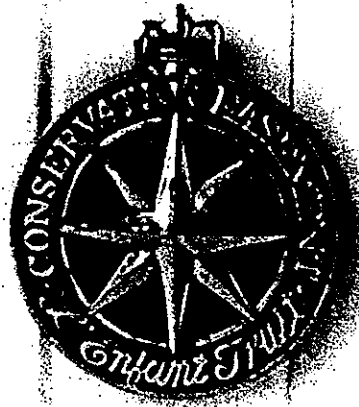


Fig. 4. This easement marker is used by the L'Enfant Trust, Washington, D.C. Photograph courtesy of Erie Landmark Company.

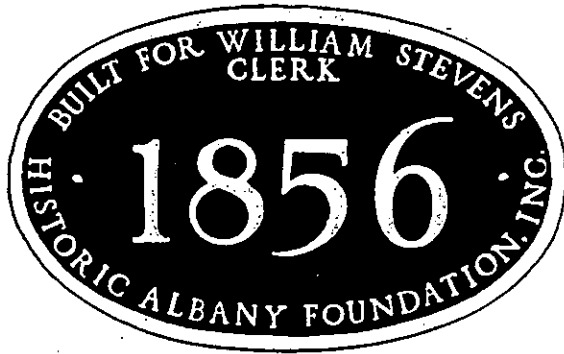


Fig. 5. By placing its name at the bottom of the plaque, Historic Albany Foundation increases public awareness of its activities. Photograph courtesy of Erie Landmark Company.

reproduced in a limited number of colors (silver and black) when used outdoors. Screen-processed plaques are nominally less expensive than metal photo and can produce text and illustration in color. However, because screen printing involves surface paint, it is susceptible to weathering and vandalism. There are more sophisticated methods of fabricating interpretive markers, such as fiber glass laminates, but these belong more in the realm of museum displays rather than to that of building markers.

2. **Shape and Size:** Depending upon the type of plaque (cast metal, processed wood, processed metal) desired, historical societies should be able to find a manufacturer able to provide a plaque of nearly any shape or size. For instance, cast metal plaques range

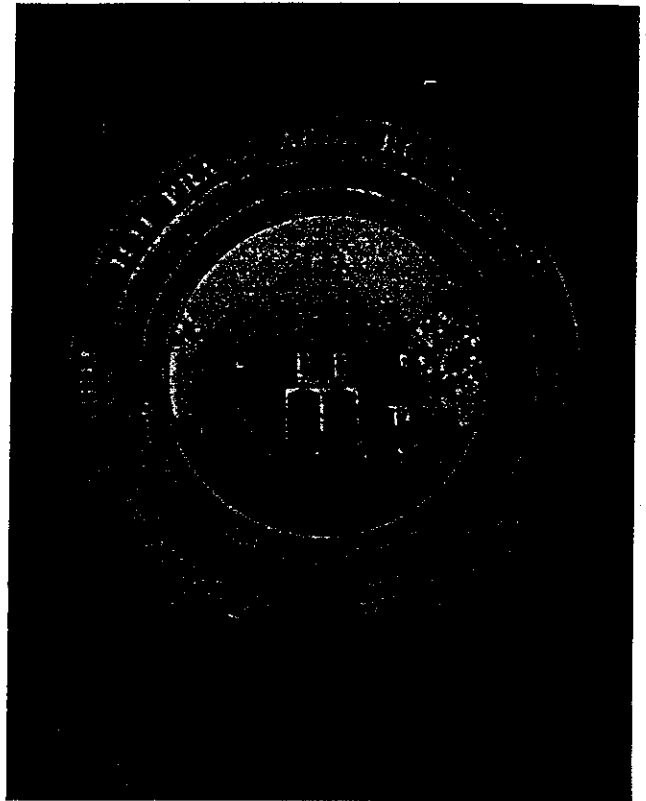


Fig. 6. An old photograph of the building, done in metalphoto, is attached to a cast aluminum plaque. Metal processing offers high impact photographic & textural interpretation. Photograph courtesy of Erie Landmark Company.

in size from twenty-four square inches to twelve square feet. Clearly, the price of the plaque depends to a great extent upon the size ordered. With respect to plaque shapes, while historical societies using processed metal usually are limited to a square or rectangular shape, in theory, no such limitations exist with respect to processed wood or cast metal. Wood can be cut into any shape. However, the more complex the shape, the higher the price. A number of mass-produced standard shapes, suitable for historic sites—squares, rectangles, ovals, and “colonials”—are available primarily through local sign shops. Finally, cast metal plaques can be made in virtually any shape since they are cast from reusable patterns. However, the more complex the shape, the more difficult to finish the edges of the plaque and, thus, the higher the price. While these steps may make the process of setting up the program seem quite complex, most plaque producers will be able to provide advice and assistance, hence greatly simplifying the decision-making process.

## Running Stage

In actually implementing a plaque program a historical society must: a) find a producer able to manufacture the type of plaque(s) selected; b) publicize the program; and c) set up an application, selection, and order processing system. Each of these steps is described in more detail below.

### Finding a Producer

Depending on the type of plaque desired, historical societies may be best off working with either a local or a national producer. Wooden and screen-printed metal plaques are available generally through local sign shops, which means there are clear advantages of working with a local producer who can offer personalized service. Metal-photo and cast metal plaques are less likely to be produced locally, and therefore, when ordered through a local sign shop, are priced in such a way to cover the costs of the "middle-man." It is possible, however, to order these types of plaques directly from a limited number of manufacturers who specialize in historic plaques. These manufacturers typically advertise in relevant periodicals, and some offer discounts to historical societies. Additionally, some state agencies keep information about these manufacturers on file.

Despite the order of presentation above, it may be helpful to first find a manufacturer to help you through the decisions incorporated through the start-up phase. The supplier should be selected on the basis of prior experience and reputation. Furthermore, for the historical society implementing a plaque program, the key is to find a producer who is able to meet the basic criteria already established and who will work with you in making the other decisions required for a successful program. In selecting a manufacturer, the historical society must be aware that plaque prices vary by producer, and it most definitely pays to shop around.

### Publicizing the Program

In general, a plaque program is, over a period of years, self-promoting in that as plaques are placed, they generate public interest, often becoming a "tradition" in themselves. The methods for publicizing a plaque program, to a large degree, are dependent upon the goals of the programs. For groups whose objective is to recognize and to coordinate restoration activities by its members, publicity can be

accomplished through internal organizational communications, e.g., newsletters and meetings.

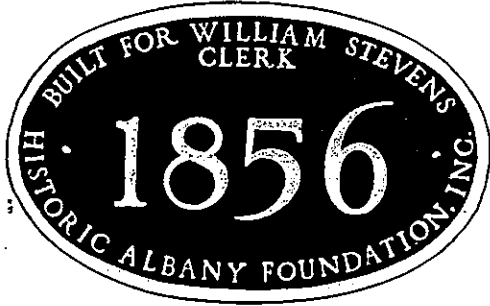
For groups using the program as a fund raiser, to stimulate community awareness or to create a walking tour, a minimal amount of promotional work is desirable and not difficult to accomplish. Often historical societies try to publicize their plaque programs using the local media, such as community newspapers and radio. Such publicity efforts may be facilitated greatly if the historical society already has mounted one or two plaques on well-known properties. A second method by which the historical society may accomplish its publicity objectives is through the use of direct mail. A simple direct mail flyer addressed to owners of historic properties often incorporates a photo of a typical plaque, an order form for a plaque, and in some cases, an application form (see section on program participation and participant selection below). An example of such a flyer is presented in Fig. 7. Annual or semi-annual award dinners or events may be used to publicize a program recognizing significant restoration efforts in the community.

### Establishing Application, Selection, and Ordering System

Eligibility criteria for program participation allow the historical society to influence and to direct community norms regarding the proper care and maintenance of historic properties. Examples of such criteria are: a) age of the structure; b) inclusion on a historic properties survey (see section below); and c) rehabilitation technique, i.e., the degree to which architectural integrity guidelines are followed. The type of application process used by the historical society depends on the nature of the criteria established for program participation. That is, those plaque programs for which stringent eligibility criteria exist are likely to have a more detailed application process than those with few criteria.

Application forms often accompany program publicity materials distributed by the historical society to potential participants. In situations in which information about all properties that might be included in the program are readily available to the historical society, such as properties listed on the National Register, the application form need only request such basic information as the name and address of the property, name and address of property owner, and date on which the property was placed on the Register or recorded in local historical records. In those cases in which such informa-

**Historic Albany Foundation's  
HISTORIC  
BUILDING  
PLAQUES**



*Our plaques are requested for buildings in the City of Albany that retain their original character, are in a good state of preservation and contribute to the historical or architectural nature of their neighborhood. After careful research, the date of construction, first owner, occupation and other pertinent information concerning the origin of a building are obtained and included with the 6" x 10" cast aluminum plaque which is custom made for each order.*


*For more information and cost, please contact  
HISTORIC ALBANY FOUNDATION  
44 Central Avenue • Albany, New York 12206 • 463-0622*

Fig. 7. Flyer publicizing the plaque program of Albany, New York. *Courtesy of Historic Albany Foundation, Albany, New York.*

tion is not readily available or in which the eligibility criteria set by the historical society demand further information (for instance, the source of information pertaining to historical significance of the property, listing of structural changes to property), the application form should incorporate questions pertaining to these issues. Of course, it is in the historical society's interest to keep its requests for information realistic and the application form as simple as possible.

In many cases the application form doubles as an order form. That is, rather than processing the application and then beginning the ordering process, the historical society requires payment and shipping information on some portion of the application form. Fig 8. shows an example of a combined (simple) application and order form.

The nature of the ordering process itself depends on the system worked out between the historical society and the plaque supplier. Some suppliers will request that all plaque orders be processed centrally




HOPSTEADING PROGRAM      HISTORIC DISTRICT HOUSE TOUR

**Newburgh Preservation Association**  
Dedicated to the revitalization of the City of Newburgh  
87 Liberty Street - Newburgh - New York 12550  
914-565-6880

\*\*\*\*\* LANDMARK YOUR HOME \*\*\*\*\*

Customized plaques such as the one below, are now available for Newburgh's historic buildings.



This bronze plaque is on display presently at NPA Headquarters for inspection.

Orders can be placed in person or by mail.

PRICE: \$ 80.00 per plaque for NPA members  
\$ 95.00 per plaque for non-members  
\$ 75.00 per plaque for members ordering 3 or more.

Please make checks payable to Newburgh Preservation Association.  
DESIGN YOUR PLAQUE ON THE BACK OF THIS SHEET \*\*\*\*\*  
Actual size of oval 10" x 7"

A NONPROFIT CORPORATION CHARTERED BY THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
PAID FOR BY THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE, CITY OF NEWBURGH

Fig. 8. Sample plaque program application. *Courtesy of Newburgh Preservation Association, Newburgh, New York.*

and that plaques be shipped to the historical society. In such cases, the historical society processes all payments and is made responsible for the final distribution of the plaques. In other cases, the supplier may be willing to accept orders directly from individual participants (using the historical society's order form), and ship directly to the participant. Delivery times vary greatly among suppliers, ranging from two weeks to three months; therefore, it is recommended strongly that plaques to be presented at some special event be ordered well in advance.

#### Other Issues

##### *Legal Restrictions*

There are no federal regulations governing the placing of historical markers although there is a common misconception that properties listed on the National Register should be marked with a uniform text. In fact, nothing seems to mandate this text other than tradition. Local and state regulations

may cover the placing of roadside markers and larger, free-standing plaques that may in some fashion disrupt the smooth flow of traffic on roadways.

#### *Mounting (and the problems of theft)*

One of the questions that most frequently arises concerns the danger of theft or vandalism. Surprisingly, it is often the smaller, less urban communities that suffer from this problem. To some extent, the type of plaque (material) influences the frequency and type of damage that may occur. Wooden plaques are more likely to be defaced but rarely stolen, whereas bronze plaques virtually are indestructible, yet appear to be the most attractive to thieves. Should theft be a concern, the two best precautions are placing the plaque in a location that makes it difficult to be reached and using commercially available epoxies to adhere the plaque, making it extremely resistant to removal. Plaques are either front mounted (holes drilled through the front of the plaque and screwed into anchors placed in the mounting surface) or rear mounted (welded studs onto the back of the plaque that are pushed into holes drilled in the mounting surface). By filling the drilled holes with epoxy, the screw or stud virtually is unremovable.

#### *Historic Building Surveys and Plaque Programs*

Some historical societies have ongoing research programs investigating the historical value of local buildings and structures. For such historical societies, one option to consider is the incorporation of

a plaque program into these ongoing research efforts. There are two advantages for tying these programs together. First, a plaque program can help cover research expenses, giving the building owner the feeling that they are getting a tangible product in return for their donation. A second advantage is that a building owner's awareness of the historical society's ongoing research efforts is increased.

#### Conclusion

As historical societies continue to enhance their efforts to inform community members about the historic importance of their neighborhoods, it is likely that, in the future, an increasing number will be considering plaque programs as highly visible, administratively simple, cost-effective approaches to community education and historic preservation. Plaque programs offer the leadership of historical societies an innovative way to make local history accessible to all members of the community. Besides enhancing the educational goals of historical societies, such programs often facilitate the meeting of other group objectives such as membership expansion, community rehabilitation, and fund raising. While this leaflet provides specific steps leading to the planning and implementation of a successful plaque program, additional information may be obtained from historical societies with plaque program experience or from suppliers specializing in historic landmarks.



Technical Leaflets are issued by the American Association for State and Local History. Providing the historical agency and museum field with detailed, up-to-date technical advice, the leaflets and reports are available through *History News* magazine to AASLH members or through the AASLH Press catalogue to any interested buyer. Copyright © 1989 by the American Association for State and Local History. Technical Leaflets should be catalogued as part of *History News*.

American Association for State and Local History Technical Leaflet 168, "Establishing a Plaque Program: Bringing Local History to the Community," *History News*, Volume 44, Number 3, May/June 1989.

Reprints are available from the American Association for State and Local History, 172 Second Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee 37201.

American Association for State and Local History endorses no particular product or service.



**SNYDER  
BUILDING**

**c. 1925**