



# Cleaning, Repairing, and Repainting South Carolina Historical Markers

While the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH) oversees the South Carolina Historical Marker Program, individual markers are proposed, funded, and erected by outside organizations that serve as a marker's sponsor. These groups are also responsible for maintaining S.C. Historical Markers as needed, including basic cleaning, repainting, minor repairs, and, if a marker is irreparably damaged, replacement.

SCDAH does not receive funds to repair or clean markers but provides the following general guidance for groups seeking to conduct such maintenance.

## Physical description

Markers are cast from aluminum. Those produced from 1937 to 1954 carried black letters on a silver base. In 1955, markers began carrying silver letters on a dark, navy blue base, a motif based on the South Carolina State Flag. In 1990, the Archives and History Commission, with recommendations from a blue-ribbon study committee, returned to the design of black letters on a silver base.

## Cleaning

If your marker only needs to be cleaned, scrub it with a bristle brush soaked in a solution of mild automotive detergent and warm water, then rinse with clear water.

## Repairs

If the cast aluminum is damaged, some machine shops can weld it. If the marker has holes in it (e.g. from bullets), fill the holes with a metal filler, then paint the filler. To ease repairs, remove markers by loosening the Allen-set screws at their base and carefully lift the tablet off the post. In some cases, damage may be so severe that repair is impractical, requiring an entirely new plaque be cast.

## Repainting

Markers with silver backgrounds and black lettering and trim withstand the elements better than those with dark blue backgrounds and silver lettering and trim. Accordingly, SCDAH now recommends painting **all** historical markers, no matter their original color scheme, with silver backgrounds and black lettering and trim.

To remove the marker tablet for repainting, loosen the Allen-set screws and carefully lift the tablet off the post. Paint the entire tablet with silver air-dry automobile enamel. More than one coat will probably be necessary if painting over a blue background. Although you may use a brush, a power sprayer will produce the most even results. Allow the paint to dry thoroughly according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Once the background is dry, paint the letters, borders, and other trim (including the South Carolina State Flag emblem) with black air-dry automobile enamel. Though you may use a brush, a hand-held rubber roller available at most paint and painting supply stores will be more efficient, rolling the paint over the tops of the letters and other raised surfaces.

## Posts

Marker posts sometimes need to be replaced due to automobile collisions or general deterioration. Older markers were typically erected on round posts, which can often be replaced locally. If you need to replace a hexagonal marker post, a new one can be purchased from the marker manufacturer Sewah Studios. Sewah may be reached at 740-373-2087 or [info@sewahstudios.com](mailto:info@sewahstudios.com).

## Want to repair a marker?

If you know of a damaged marker and would like to pay for or conduct repairs, please notify the marker program coordinator, who will try to put you in touch with the marker's sponsoring organization.

If you have recently repaired or replaced a marker, please notify the program coordinator and provide "before" and "after" photos for our records.

## Questions

Additional questions about how to maintain S.C. Historical Markers should be sent to:

Edwin C. Breeden  
Coordinator, South Carolina Historical Marker Program  
8301 Parklane Road  
Columbia, SC 29223  
803-896-6182  
[ebreeden@scdah.sc.gov](mailto:ebreeden@scdah.sc.gov)