

Cemeteries and South Carolina Historical Markers

*The South Carolina Historical Marker Program was established in 1936 and is administered by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH). It is entirely separate from the National Register of Historic Places program. A site's eligibility for a state historical marker can only be confirmed after SCDAH has received and **thoroughly reviewed a complete marker application**.*

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What might make a cemetery eligible for a state historical marker?

Like any other historic site, cemeteries may be eligible for a state marker if they can be documented as possessing historical significance at the local, state, or national level.

Such significance is often based on how wide of a population is represented by the cemetery. For example, municipal cemeteries or others that were the main public burial ground for a town or rural settlement are often eligible for state markers. Cemeteries that were only utilized by one or a few local families may not be eligible, unless there are other factors that make the site important.

Are family cemeteries eligible for state historical markers?

Sometimes, if they possess a broader historical significance apart from their use by one or a few families. For instance, if it is the burial ground of a family that first settled a town or other area, and/or it contains historic headstones that are the oldest remaining physical fabric associated with that place's settlement, then a family cemetery might be a marker candidate. Depending on the time period, family cemeteries were frequently part of larger historic properties (e.g. plantations, homesteads) that are themselves eligible for a state marker. In those cases, it's often more viable to mark the entire property and mention the cemetery in the marker inscription.

My cemetery has a significant person buried there. Does that make it eligible for a state marker?

No. Eligibility for a state marker is based on the cemetery's collective significance to a broader community. An especially significant occupant may sometimes be *mentioned* in a marker's inscription, but their presence does not by itself make the cemetery a state marker candidate. Including multiple occupants who were locally well-known or who committed noble deeds (e.g. military service) will also not automatically make a cemetery a state marker candidate.

Are individual graves eligible for state markers?

No. If a person was significant enough to be the focus of a state marker, that marker should be placed at a location closely associated with what made them significant *while alive*, such as their place of residence. **State historical markers are not memorials.**

Does being approved for a state marker put any protections or restrictions on cemeteries?

No. Markers are valuable tools for raising awareness of a site's importance, but they do not confer any special legal status or otherwise impact what may be done with a property. Approval for a state marker also does not make a site eligible for any kind of financial assistance for preservation or maintenance.