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## INITIAL APPLICATION FOR A BERGEN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY “BLUE MARKER”

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Thank you for your interest in sponsoring a “Blue Marker” with the Bergen County Historical Society. Begun in 1960, this program remains a unique collaboration between the Society (a not-for-profit volunteer organization) and dozens of private property owners, municipalities, agencies, and individuals that share a passion for preserving our history. More than a hundred of these distinctive markers now designate historically significant houses, churches, schools, mills, barns, and railroad stations; roads and cemeteries; and the sites where important events occurred or buildings once stood. Each marker helps tell a part of the history of Bergen County—and the contributions its people have made to the great epic that is the American story.

More than just a wayside marker, a Blue Marker from the Bergen County Historical Society also means that the site or event it commemorates is not only important, but that it has been researched thoroughly—that the information presented on the marker has stood up to rigorous review by acknowledged experts on Bergen’s history. Behind it, too, stands a substantial body of original research. The files from this research are kept in the archives of the Historical Society, where they remain available to researchers, professional and amateur alike.

Just as each site is unique, each marker involves its own challenges and rewards. Our application process assures that we continue to meet the high standards set almost half a century ago. **The most important part of this process is the Initial Application. While there is no actual “application form,” the Initial Application consists of three components:**

**1. A narrative presentation that justifies the site’s suitability for a Blue Marker (5 copies)**

What about this site deserves special notice? How does this site tie into the bigger narrative of community, municipality, county, state, nation?

Can claims made about this site be verified by documentary evidence? Will you be able to produce copies of this evidence? (If the answer to either of these is no, it is unlikely we will decide in favor of placing one of our markers at the site.)

*How long should this narrative presentation be?* The narrative presentation should be as long as it needs to be to convince our marker committee that this is a site that should have a Blue Marker, and that you are prepared to present the research to back it up.

**2. Supporting documentation (5 copies each item)**

You will need to include copies of the property deed that shows the present owner of the property where the marker is to be sited.

We encourage you to include copies of any other documentation that will help to make the case for this site.

You may also wish to include letters of support from other individuals or organizations. (Note that we give far more weight to a letter from a respected historian, for example, than to one from a local politician or business booster.)

**3. A non-refundable \$200 application fee made payable to Bergen County Historical Society**

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In preparing your Initial Application, we encourage you to be as thorough as you possibly can (a well researched and thoroughly documented Initial Application will often mean that the rest of the process is a snap).

After we receive your Initial Application, our marker committee will meet to discuss it in as timely a fashion as we are able (please keep in mind that we are all volunteers—and that we consider each application with seriousness). After meeting, our marker committee will inform you that it has made one of three recommendations:

1. *We have accepted your application.* In this case, we will ask to meet with you to discuss how to proceed further, and you will need to provide a \$1,000 deposit. We will continue to advise you as to what additional research may need to be accomplished, but the completion of this work will remain your responsibility. *If your site is a structure, please remember that its physical substance counts as documentary evidence as well—researchers will need full access to it at some point during the research process. Whatever your site, we feel it bears mentioning that intensive research often produces surprises: you may learn that things you have long thought about your site turn out not to be true. Our committee remains the final arbiter as to what claims are made about the site on the Blue Marker. All research compiled during this process becomes the property of the Bergen County Historical Society, to remain available to the public.* When the final research has been completed and the text of the marker approved, you will owe a balance of \$1,000 when we order the completed Blue Marker, which will become your property upon its fabrication.

Total cost (including Initial Application fee): \$2,200.

2. *We are returning your application for more work.* This means that while your site seems to have merit, you have not adequately presented your case or provided adequate documentation for it. We will reconsider your application after you have addressed our concerns with it, with no need for an additional application fee.
3. *We have declined to proceed with your application.* Your site does not meet our criteria for a Blue Marker.

With over a hundred under our belts, we have learned that each Blue Marker is an adventure—for us, as well as for the property owner or organization that sponsors it.