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## Group strives to restore 'defining feature' of Pa.

By Bob Stiles, TRIBUNE-REVIEW  
Monday, December 12, 2011

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Keystone Marker Trust members suggest anyone interested in restoring the roadway markers first contact their group:  
[www.keystonemarkerttrust.org](http://www.keystonemarkerttrust.org)

### About the writer

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Time and weather have taken a toll on the blue-and-gold keystone markers that have stood silent vigil along Pennsylvania roadways, some for more than 100 years.

Nathaniel Guest, Jack Graham and other members of the Keystone Marker Trust want to change what Mother Nature has done to the signs. The trust is repainting, refurbishing or recasting the markers, or encouraging others to do so, because PennDOT can no longer afford to repair or replace them.

"They're built like battleships, but time and trials take their toll," said Guest, a Montgomery County resident and trust president.

"Our history is being lost," added Graham, trust vice president. "Nobody has the time for history anymore. I like to say, They're the threads of the fabric of the history of Pennsylvania."

Two freshly made markers will be put up this spring in Greensboro in Greene County, as the trust moves restoration efforts from eastern and central Pennsylvania westward. One sign will go up on Stony Hill Road; the other on Greensboro Road.

The markers typically list the town's name, who the community was named after and when the municipality was founded.

Greensboro, like Greensburg, was named after Nathanael Greene, a Revolutionary War general.

"It's a perfect symbol of Pennsylvania," said trust member Justin Boyd of Rostraver, who is spearheading the Greensboro project. "It's really the first thing you see when you enter a town."

Graham is talking to leaders in Wharton Township in Fayette County, about replacing a marker in Farmington that was struck by a vehicle.

The State Highway Department — PennDOT's predecessor — started putting up the signs on state roads as part of the "good roads" movement in the early 1900s. The markers continued going up until the early 1940s, when PennDOT's involvement stopped.

The transportation agency doesn't have the money to work on the markers because it spends about \$19 million yearly to erect an average 110,000 stop, yield and other signs across the state, PennDOT spokesman Steve Chizmar said.

"Unfortunately, when it comes down to replacing stop signs or markers ... the stop signs must come first," he said.

That's where trust members enter the picture. The group has repainted or encouraged others to work on more than 75 markers since its incorporation last year, said Guest, who has a master's degree in historic preservation and a law degree.

"We try to encourage towns to do them," said Graham, a Perry County resident. "If they don't want to do it, then we ask them to round up volunteers. That's been pretty successful."

His group "encourages, charms or coerces" involvement, Graham joked.

The refurbishing can be as cheap as the cost of proper paint, or cost as much as \$600 to \$2,500, depending on the work and whether a new pole is needed, trust members said.

The trust has the names of several foundries that can do recasting work, and offers various replacement items at a cost.

The group keeps a database of the markers and has several hundred of them listed on its website.

A habit that Graham formed in the 1970s helped create the database.

While working for the state park service, Graham began writing down marker information on notecards.

In 2005, he came across those cards while rummaging through a desk.

"I was shocked by how many cards I did have," Graham said. "It was like, 'What am I going to do?' I knew I had a database there, so I had to type them up."

Guest then saw some articles Graham wrote about the markers, and they began working together in the trust.

"They are one of the things that makes Pennsylvania unique," Guest said. "These markers are a defining feature of Pennsylvania. They're part of our character, and they've been neglected."

PennDOT appreciates the trust's efforts, Chizmar said.

"Obviously, we applaud the efforts of these groups that come forward and help restore a piece of Pennsylvania that would be lost," he said. "It's a piece of Americana. It's a piece of history from a bygone era."

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