

# MARKER RESEARCH GUIDE

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) created this guide to help county historical commissions and marker sponsors develop a strong application for an organization or institution as a topic for a historical marker. It is a guide in researching and preparing the narrative history.

**NARRATIVE HISTORY:** This is the key element to any marker application and the vehicle through which historical context and significance are demonstrated and proven. The narrative history is essentially a research paper that includes four key components — **context, overview, significance and documentation**. A sample is included.

- I. **CONTEXT:** The historical context represents a broader set of facts or circumstances that explains why the entity should be considered historic. What were the elements that directly led to its development? How does the entity's history relate to the history of its community, its county or its region? What is its relevance to the broader history? What events took place (locally, regionally or nationally) that may have had a bearing on how or why the entity's development was important? History does not take place in a vacuum; it is dynamic and interconnected, and the context explores these elements.
- II. **OVERVIEW:** This is the main body of the narrative history, and it represents the key facts in the story. The overview should be told, as closely as possible, in chronological order, with clearly documented connections between earlier and more recent aspects of the context story. While a complete overview is required, the central focus should be on the *historical period of significance* (see *Significance* section), i.e., the formative years of the entity and important changes or developments in its history.
- III. **HISTORICAL/CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:** A topic is considered to have historical significance if it had influences, effect or impact on the course of history or cultural development; age alone does not determine significance. Topics do not necessarily have to be of statewide or national significance; many historical markers deal with local history and a local level of significance. They may also have cultural significance. To determine significance, ask such questions as: How did the entity play a role in history? How has it made a difference in the context of local or state history? Who were the individuals involved in the entity's history?
- IV. **DOCUMENTATION:** This is, in effect, the evidence necessary to develop the history of significance of a topic. It is the foundation of historical interpretation and accurate research. For the purposes of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, documentation associated with applications should be broad-based and demonstrate a survey of all available resources, both primary and secondary (see *Types of Sources* section below). Documentation serves as a detailed guide so future researchers can follow the research trail for their own purposes. As used in marker applications, it is most commonly manifested through endnotes, photographs or maps (see *Preparing the Reference Notes* section below).

## TYPES OF SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

The THC will consider the objectivity and reliability of information sources used in compiling a narrative history. Whenever possible, consult **primary source** material. Primary sources — those that are contemporary with the topic — include newspaper accounts, diaries, meeting minutes, deed records, census records and legal documents. Such sources, as well as the recollections of disinterested, unbiased and authoritative persons, are preferred over secondary sources.

When using **secondary sources**, check them thoroughly since they are often not as reliable as primary sources. Secondary sources, such as history books, are not contemporary with the topic's history. Oral

histories collected from authoritative sources are valuable research tools if properly documented. Any claims of uniqueness (earliest, oldest, first, largest, etc.) must be accompanied by factual documentation from an authoritative, unbiased source.

## **SUGGESTED SOURCES FOR COMPILING HISTORIES**

### **Institutional Records**

- Church (biographical information on birth, death, marriage; congregational records)
- School (biographical information, building information, social history)
- Fraternal (membership information, dates, building information)

### **Corporate Records**

- Ledgers, client files, advertisements, mortgages

### **Published Histories**

- County (information on buildings, people, institutions, events)
- Community (information on buildings, people, institutions, events)
- Business (commercial trends, economic base of community)
- Fraternal (building information, social history)
- *The Handbook of Texas*, Texas State Historical Association, online or print

### **Family Papers**

- Deeds (ownership, property value, associated improvements)
- Letters and diaries (biographical information, building information, social and economic history)
- Photographs (biographical information, building information)

### **Directories and Gazettes**

- City directories (addresses, approximate dates, occupations)
- Business directories (addresses, images of building, approximate dates)

### **Maps and Plats**

- Sanborn maps (plans, dates of construction, materials, settlement patterns)
- Bird's Eye View maps (building information, settlement patterns, natural features)
- Property and subdivision plats (building hierarchies, dates, settlement patterns)
- Tourist guides (dates, recreation habits, histories)

### **Photographs and Printed Images**

- Postcards (biographical information, building evolution, landscape changes)

### **Promotional Materials**

- City promotional pamphlets and brochures (addresses, approximate dates, biographical information, images)

### **Newspapers and Journals**

- Advertisements (owner information, dates, building information, neighborhood development)
- Society pages (biographical information on civic leaders, institutional history)
- Articles (significant local events, economic history, social history, building information)

### **Oral Histories**

- Minority history, social history, business history, building evolution and uses

### **Online Sources**

- Portal to Texas History (<http://texashistory.unt.edu/>)
- The Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/>)
- Baylor Institute for Oral History (<https://library.web.baylor.edu/oralhistory>)
- The Texas Collection (<http://www.baylor.edu/lib/texas/>)
- The DeGolyer Library at SMU (<http://www.smu.edu/cul/degolyer/>)
- Texas General Land Office (<https://www.glo.texas.gov/>)
- Texas State Library and Archives Commission (<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/>)
- American Association for State and Local History (<http://www.aaslh.org/>)
- Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/library/libarch-digital.html>)

## PREPARING THE REFERENCE NOTES

For the specific purposes of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, the **required** means of resource documentation to be used in preparing the historical narrative are reference notes. Generally speaking, facts that cannot be assumed to be common knowledge should be documented with a reference note. They can be either footnotes (placed at the foot of the page on which the fact is mentioned), endnotes (listed sequentially at the end of the history) or parenthetical notes (placed in parentheses immediately following the fact within the narrative history). The notes must be complete so the reader finds the referenced source easily.

Regardless of which type of reference note is used, the first use of a source should include a full first citation (all relevant resource details) with abbreviated information thereafter in subsequent citations (see examples below). **Note:** With the use of full citation footnotes, a bibliography is no longer a required element of marker applications.

### Examples of First Full Citations (Footnotes or Endnotes):

<sup>1</sup> Terry G. Jordan, *Texas Graveyards: A Cultural Legacy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Orange County Deed Records, Book 4, p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> 1900 United States Census, Fort Bend County, Texas (Roll 1553) Enumeration District 16, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Bessie Jones. Interview with Scotty Jergenson, June 21, 1991. Tape recording and transcript available at the Darrouzett Public Library.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Maria Gutierrez to Henry Guerra, May 23, 1922. Private collection of Henry Guerra, Dallas.

<sup>6</sup> "San Jacinto Monument Reconditioned." *Temple Daily Telegram*, Vol. 76, No. 256; July 31, 1983, p. 5-C.

### Examples of Subsequent Citations:

<sup>9</sup> Jordan, p. 83.

<sup>10</sup> Orange County Deed Records, p. 140.

<sup>11</sup> 1900 United States Census, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Jones, 1991.

<sup>13</sup> Gutierrez letter.

<sup>14</sup> *Temple Daily Telegram*, 1972, p. 5-C.

**Note:** For sources used in preparing the text but not specifically cited, list them separately under the heading ADDITIONAL SOURCES. For further assistance on reference note styles, see the following guides, or contact your local library.

*Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. 9th ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 2021.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Edited by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizcup, and William T. Fitzgerald. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

## RESEARCH CHECKLIST

Narrative histories submitted to the THC in support of marker applications for **churches/synagogues** should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following information. **Note:** Churches/synagogues may be considered eligible for subject markers if they have been in existence for at least 50 years and are considered historically significant.

- Current and former names of the church/synagogue, with background on the origins of the names
- Current and any former locations, with reasons for relocations
- Founding information, such as names of founder(s), the establishment date, circumstances/reasons for establishment, early ministers and leaders, etc.
- Physical facilities or structures in which church/synagogue was located, or is still located
- Important or long-standing leaders or members of the church
- Community involvement and social calendar
- If the church/synagogue no longer exists, discuss the circumstances of its demise