

MONUMENT POLICY

Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation
(Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District)

THE NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic is an 8-county district that was established by Act of Congress in 1996 to preserve, protect and interpret the Civil War battlefields and related sites throughout the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. A Congressional commission was tasked with establishing the district and creating a private non-profit entity to manage the district in perpetuity. That entity, the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (SVBF) has facilitated the preservation of over 8,000 acres of battlefield land and manages almost 5,000 of those acres. In addition to land acquisition and preservation, the foundation has opened hundreds of acres to the public as battlefield parks; established trail systems; created a network of interpretive signage; opened visitor centers and a museum; and provided interpretive, education, and tourism related programs that benefit both our region and our national constituency.

The SVBF has created the most extensively protected, well-preserved, and accurately interpreted collection of Civil War sites in the United States, stretching from the Allegheny Highlands to the heights of the Blue Ridge Mountains – a place of unmatched scenic beauty where generations can gather to understand, commemorate, and draw meaning from our nation’s heritage.

MONUMENTS

The battlefields and historic sites in the National Historic District are places of commemoration, places that memorialize and tell the story of the Americans – Union and Confederate soldiers, free and enslaved civilians – who lived through the tumultuous Civil War era. Monuments are, and always have been, an important part of that commemoration, and important parts of interpreting the history. On battlefields, they also provide focal points and iconography that help visitors understand that these are not “everyday” locations, but hallowed ground where Americans of all sides struggled to deal with the wrenching issues that divided our nation then, forging the country we are today.

- The SVBF will consider the addition of monuments to its battlefield and historic sites when they add to the commemoration and interpretation of these places and do not significantly detract from their historic integrity.
- The SVBF is opposed to the wholesale eradication or removal of plaques, statues, monuments, place names, and other public honors associated with the history and heritage of the United States.
- The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation supports state laws that would forbid local governments from removing or damaging monuments, and prefers that historic monuments remain

located where they were originally placed. However, if Civil War monuments that have relevance to the Valley are removed from their original locations, the SVBF is open to assisting with appropriate relocation of such monuments to the National Historic District.

- Rather than taking down Confederate monuments, we should be adding additional monuments that address the subjects of slavery, the Underground Railroad, self-emancipation, U.S.C.T. service, the 13th through 15th amendments, reconstruction, the Jim Crow era, and the Civil Rights Acts. Existing monuments should be kept intact, but can often be complemented with interpretative signage that provides context and reflects a broader history than the monument itself evidences. Our history sometimes involves terrible judgment and shocking inhumanity to our fellow humans, but we should not hide that history. Instead, we should learn from our flaws, recognize our progress, and acknowledge that still more progress must come.
- The SVBF will not invest money or commit funds from battlefield preservation, Federal appropriations, or its general operating budget to facilitate relocation of monuments to the National Historic District. The SVBF will, however, be open to acting as a conduit to receive funds for that purpose.
- Monument projects are first vetted by SVBF staff. Upon staff recommendation, projects are brought before the Board of Trustees.
- Each monument or monument project is subject to approval by the Board of Trustees, including all elements, such as design, wording, and location.