

Official Scenic Historic Markers—Definition of Significance

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to establish a definition of “significance” for use by the Cultural Properties Review Committee (CPRC) when evaluating applications for the Official Scenic Historic Marker Program. The word significance is critical in evaluating proposed markers, but it is not defined in the regulations of the marker program. The implementing regulations of the program, under NMAC 4.10.6.8 Criteria for the Selection and Preparation of Text for Official Scenic Historic Markers, state:

“A. Markers shall be used exclusively for designating sites, districts, and other locations significant in the social, economic, political, scientific, architectural, and artistic history of New Mexico . . .”

“B. Features of the natural landscape . . . can be designated . . . provided their significance has been sufficiently documented.”

These implementing regulations also use the undefined terms of “merits” and “extraordinary significance” to evaluate individual buildings, which are not usually eligible for a marker. The term “merits” shall be synonymous with “significance.” The term “extraordinary significance” shall be determined by the CPRC in policy or on a case-by-case basis.

Definition of Significance for Use in Evaluating Official Scenic Historic Markers

A subject of an Official Scenic Historic Marker shall be significant if (A) it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of New Mexico history; (B) it is directly associated with the lives of persons that have made important contributions to New Mexico’s past; (C) it embodies distinctive characteristics in architecture and planning or that possess high artistic values; (D) it is associated with archaeological sites important to New Mexico’s prehistory or history; or (E) if it is associated with topographical or geological features of the landscape or scenic vistas that have significantly influenced the history of the state.¹

¹ Marker criteria for evaluation derives from the National Register of Historic Places and can be found at 36 CFR Part 60 of the National Historic Preservation Act. These criteria were adopted for the State Register of Cultural Properties and is referenced in the Cultural Properties Act under NMAC 4.10.18.11A(1).