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Mountville replacing historical markers

Intelligencer Journal
Lancaster New Era
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Mountville

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By DEAN LEE EVANS
Correspondent

Keystone-shaped identification markers once dotted the landscape in nearly every town and city in Pennsylvania, including Mountville.

But time, neglect and theft have taken their toll on the historic markers, and some are being replaced.

Mountville councilman Richard Spiegel, chairman of the culture and recreation committee, said the borough will soon take possession of three newly forged replica markers by the end of

Keystone markers like this one in Salunga were erected man...

February.

"The new markers will be made of cast aluminum," Spiegel told council on Jan. 28.

Historical markers became a common fixture in the 1920s and 1930s, when paved highways and roads began to connect towns and cities with greater ease.

The markers contained information such as the town or city being entered, the founding date and the name and distance of the next town or city based on the direction of travel.

In some cases, the signs also contain information on a city or town's original name, or the origins of its name.

Some markers can still be found scattered throughout Lancaster County. A sign in Salunga stands completely intact and legible with its original pole and finial. To the west, a marker pole stands tilted and rusted along Route 441 near Columbia.

Other signs have been replaced with poor reproductions or are affixed to other types of poles and mountings.

Mountville once had two of the blue-and-yellow cast-iron markers at each end of Main Street. One has long since disappeared, while a second damaged sign sits in storage at the borough's public works building.

When the borough first considered replacing the signs last year, officials found it to be too expensive to repair the existing cast-iron sign.

Spiegel suggested complete replacements, including a third marker for College Avenue.

"College Avenue did not have the traffic that it does now," Spiegel said.

An organization called Keystone Marker Trust is working with municipalities throughout the state to replace poles, finials and mounting hardware for existing markers or replace missing markers.

According to its website, the Trust is "dedicated to preserving, interpreting, and re-creating these proud symbols of our past."

The organization partnered with the Spring City Electrical Manufacturing Company of Spring City to provide marker signs, posts and other replacement parts.

According to a Trust press release, Greensboro, in western Pennsylvania, became the first town in Pennsylvania in nearly 70 years to receive newly forged markers last November.

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The trust's website, <http://www.keystonemarketr.../>, allows uses to search for markers, send pictures and locations of current markers or report on the fate of missing markers.



Spiegel said the borough plans to work with the local Chamber of Commerce to hold a dedication ceremony with local and state officials sometime in the spring.

"It will be similar to what we did with the (Mountville Veterans Memorial) bridge," he said.

Spiegel said the dedication is a great precursor to the celebrations and events associated with the borough's 200th anniversary in 2014.

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