

The Knox Trail - Restoration Projects



BEFORE



AFTER

Click on images for larger versions. Each image size = about 60K.

In 1993 the Ticonderoga Historical Society undertook the restoration of the Knox Trail plaques in the Village of Ticonderoga (above).

As with most bronze tablets, these had been covered with a dark patina that made them almost unrecognizable from a distance and certainly did not present the richness of the sculptural detail that had been created in them in 1926.

Using a technique developed in consultation with the National Park Service, which uses a system of air abrasive cleaning with a compound of pulverized walnut shells, a company in Rhode Island restored the original finish and then sealed each plaque with a lacquer coating.

These restorations still require regular maintenance, but the contrast of the patinated plaques with the restored ones suggests the end result is worth the added effort.

Of course, bronze monuments do not need to be restored to *original* condition. There is nothing wrong with leaving them in a patinated condition. But even if left *natural*, one must recognize

that there is often a significant level of conservation needed to keep them stable. If left completely alone, they will eventually degrade.

On the Knox Trail one sees these bronzes in a variety of settings, from rural to urban, and in every state of preservation and decay.

Perhaps the worst case is [New York State Knox Monument #21](#), which sits in a narrow curb between a shopping center parking lot and a major highway. In this position it is subjected to the added impact of winter road salt, thrown up as slush and spray from passing cars and snowplows on the highway as well as piled on from the plowing of the parking lot. This has pitted the surface nearly beyond repair. There is also apparent damage from a mis-driven snow plow used to clear the lot, the monument prone to being buried in a roadside snowbank much of the time (see [close-up view 86K](#)).

There are several techniques available and widely used for preserving patinated bronze in an outdoor setting. Links are provided below. Even an occasional brushing with detergent and water will help retard the damaging effects of pollutants and road salt. And applying protective coatings will buffer the metal from corrosive compounds in the environment.

We would like to suggest that organizations and volunteers consider adopting one or more of these nearly forgotten monuments, and coordinate their efforts with their respective state historic marker authorities.

Some appear, from the landscaping which surrounds them, to have been recognized as important objects for preservation. And, as indicated above, some are the focus of concerted community efforts to restore them to their original condition. Perhaps others will benefit from such an adoption program, particularly if it includes attention paid to the conservation of the bronze plaques attached to each.

Sources:

Caring for bronze - a general resource guide: <http://www.hfmgv.org/histories/cis/brass.html#1>

An example of one outdoor bronze conservation project:

<http://www.nps.gov/vick/preserve/mnts/metal.htm>

The markers themselves, and any other physical/tangible property associated with them remain the property of the State of New York. Any proposed restoration, replacement, removal, relocation etc. must be brought to the attention to the New York State Museum's office of Museum Services, c/o George R. Hamell [ghamell2@mail.nysed.gov or, 518/486-7260].