

# MONUMENT POLICY

The battlefields and historic sites throughout the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District are places of remembrance and commemoration that memorialize and tell the story of the soldiers and civilians; Union and Confederate; enslaved and free Americans who lived through the tumultuous and defining years of the American Civil War and the reconstruction and the decades of reconstruction and civil rights struggles that followed. Monuments are, and always have been, an important part of that commemoration, and an important part of interpreting history and understanding the past. On battlefields, they provide focal points and tangible icons that help visitors understand that they are on hallowed ground where Americans of all sides struggled to deal with the wrenching issues that divided our nation and forged the country we are today. Monuments have for thousands of years expressed the ideas and ideals of past generations. They have spoke to the present and called us to reflection; to seek our own understanding; and draw meaning from the past for our own time. The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (SVBF) considers monuments to be historic in their own right; to be important features on historic rural and urban landscapes; and to be worthy of protection. Accordingly, the SVBF makes the following statements of policy:

- 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 SVBF asserts that rather than taking down Confederate monuments, additional monuments should be added at historically appropriate sites throughout the historic district 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 that history should not be hidden. Instead, we should learn from our flaws, recognize our progress, and acknowledge that still more progress must and will come.
- The SVBF supports existing and future state laws that forbid state or local governments from removing, damaging or otherwise altering monuments, and strongly emphasizes the assertion and belief that monuments remain located where originally placed.
- If in the unfortunate event, that a monument to Union or Confederate soldiers; Civil War officers or commanders; civilians of the period, both enslaved or free are removed from their original locations, and if said monument is considered relevant to the story of the struggle from the Civil War to Civil Rights in the Shenandoah Valley; the SVBF is open to assisting with appropriate relocation of such monuments to the National Historic District.
- The SVBF will consider the addition of new monuments to its battlefields and historic sites when the monument adds to the commemoration and interpretation of those places and does not significantly detract from the historic integrity of the site.
- 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 and steward funds for that purpose.
- All future Monument projects will first be researched and vetted by SVBF staff. Upon staff recommendation, projects will be brought before the Board of Trustees for review.
- Each monument or monument project is subject to approval by the Board of Trustees, including all elements of the monument itself, such as design, wording, location and design of surrounding landscape.

