

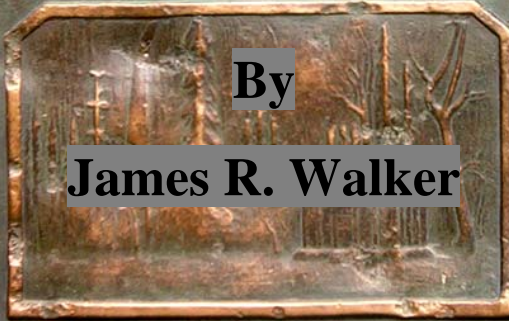
CLIMB THE MOUNTAINS AND GET THEIR GOOD TIDINGS
NATURE'S PEACE WILL FLOW INTO YOU
AS SUNSHINE FLOWS INTO TREES



Operation Rediscover Action Plan

DROP OF ... LEAVES"

BUILT HERE A SUGAR PINE CABIN IN 1869
AND MADE THIS HOME FOR TWO YEARS



By

James R. Walker

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE NOBLE
SERVICE WHICH THIS FRIEND AND PRO-
TECTOR OF NATURE RENDERED TO THE
PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES THIS
TABLET HAS BEEN PLACED HERE IN
1924 BY THE CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE
OF SOCIAL WORK.

Operation Rediscover Action Plan

**Locating, preserving and sharing bronze
plaques & memorials**

By

James R. Walker

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Introduction

The purpose of this action plan

Bronze plaques and memorials exist to preserve the memory of an important person, place or event. However, they are in jeopardy of being neglected and forgotten if no one takes action to care for them and preserve their memory for future generations. If you have made a commitment to take that action, thank you! You won't be disappointed.

Operation Rediscover gives specific step-by-step directions how to rediscover, care for and share information about bronze plaques and memorials. It is designed to be used along with my how-to manual [*Preserving Bronze Plaques & Memorials.*](#)

I realize that this is an ambitious plan and one that is impossible for just one person to fulfill. But even if just one plaque or memorial is given a fresh voice, the world will be better by that much. And as other people see it happen, the vision will expand as they also choose to take action.

Review this whole manual, especially the examples at the end, before starting, so you will have a good feel for what is involved.

I have provided plenty of space for taking notes if you want to print out this eBook.

Searching for plaques & memorials

In order for bronze plaques and memorials to fulfill their purpose, they must be noticed. Sadly, with the passage of time, they tend to blend in with their surroundings, becoming for all intents and purposes invisible. So the first step in Operation Rediscover is to “rediscover” them.

If you are constantly on the lookout, you will be surprised how many you find -- sometimes in the most unlikely locations. Public places that present a larger potential audience, though, are where you are most likely to find them. Historic sites, monuments, city centers, state buildings and grounds, parks, theme parks, zoos, schools, trails and cemeteries are all good places to explore.

Put yourself in a “search” mode, as if you are on an exotic scavenger hunt with historic treasures being the prize. With a little practice, you will see how easy this is and you will start to notice them where you didn’t before.

Once you find one, spend a few minutes reading what it has to say and absorb its message.

Researching bronze plaques & memorials

Bronze plaques and memorials are the result of a lot of thought, creativity and expense. Putting them up is a deliberate undertaking. They are expensive to create, so they must communicate their message with a minimum amount of words. The idea is to spark a curiosity to learn more and turn a brief sketch into a complete picture.

Research is the way to make that happen. Start by asking the following questions: who, what, where, when and why. Use them to uncover stories that go beyond just the basic facts.

Who or what is the plaque or memorial dedicated to? What person or group sponsored the memorial? What made it important to them? When was it placed there? Where it is located may be obvious, but make sure you have the exact address and directions where to find it, if it can't easily be seen from the street.

Also get GPS coordinates. Many cell phones have GPS installed. If you don't have one that does, you can enter the address in Google Earth and zoom in on the location. The bottom of the screen will display the coordinates as you pin point the plaque or memorial's position.

Go online to find information about the person, place or event. The more famous ones are easy to find information about, but the obscure ones that require more detective work give more of a feeling of satisfaction.

We will be using Waymarking.com (which has free basic access) as a way to share the information you have gathered. Check their site (by entering the appropriate key words in the search box on their home page) to see if they have your plaque or memorial listed. If it is, you might be able to find more information and add it to what they have. If it isn't, this would be a good opportunity to fill the information void.

Documenting bronze plaques & memorials

The purpose of this step is to record what you have discovered in order to make the last step – Sharing – easier. It should be ongoing through the whole operation.

I use my computer to compile the information I have gathered when I am ready to post it online, but I use a notebook or binder to keep field and research notes and other documents, since I can take it with me on site. This might not be the case for you, especially if you have a smart phone or similar device that allows you to make notes, take pictures and access various media on location. The main idea is to keep the information you gather handy in one place.

I put all the information I gather in one document for later organizing and save it in a folder with the plaque name. I take plenty of pictures and label them in an organized way in a separate subfolder.

Assessing the condition of the plaque or memorial

I am making the assumption that the bronze plaque or memorial you are dealing with will need a preservation treatment. This is because they all will need it sooner or later and it should be done at regular intervals. And the chances are great it has never had a treatment since it was installed.

Look for signs of deterioration. Take pictures and notify those who are responsible if you see any serious problems.

When the highlighted areas of the lettering and design elements start to darken, it means that the original clear coat finish is no longer working, allowing pollutants to tarnish the metal. The preservation treatment might reverse the effects if done soon enough, although you will probably need to repeat it more often.

Mineral deposits are another common problem to look for. When a plaque or memorial is exposed to hard water and periodically gets wet, as it dries it will develop a whitish, spongy crust. This will get thicker over time, absorbing pollutants and moisture, accelerating the break-down of the clear coat finish. [*Preserving Bronze Plaques & Memorials*](#) has a special section showing how to treat this.

Green streaks are signs that the bronze itself is disintegrating. This is usually a case for a complete restoration of the plaque or memorial, but it is best to consult with a conservationist before doing anything.

Damage to the metal from vandalism or improper maintenance, etc., also needs the attention of a trained professional. A local foundry or historical society may have someone they can recommend. I also have some connections around the country and might be able to offer some help finding someone.

Obtaining permission to perform preservation treatment

While preserving a plaque or memorial is a valuable service, it is still important to get permission before doing it. Knowing who sponsored the installation will help in finding out who to approach if it is located on private property. Be prepared to make several phone calls to get to the right person.

Public places are usually cared for by city, county or state departments. Decide which of these fits and call the proper agency to find out who to talk to.

If you meet any resistance to having the preservation treatment done, please refer them to this page which explains why it is important:

<http://walkermetalsmith.com/plaques&memorialsbook.htm>

Sometimes, those who installed the bronze plaque or memorial deliberately intend for it to oxidize and turn green. The preservation treatment will disturb this, so it is doubly important to check with the owner.

Performing the preservation treatment

In order for a bronze plaque or memorial to perform its job at its best, it has to remain in good physical condition. This is the step that makes that happen.

Follow the instructions outlined in [*Preserving Bronze Plaques & Memorials.*](#) While this is a job one person can do, it is more fun to have help. In every way this is a community service. Those who share in the work can also share the glory when it is done. Don't forget to take a lot of pictures.

The ideal time to begin this step is soon after the installation because the process involves using wax to protect the clear coat finish. If that finish is always protected from the elements, it will last a very long time.

Sharing the information

This step gives you a way to publicize information and photos about a bronze plaque or memorial, making it possible for many more people to know about it than just those who physically visit the site.

Right now there isn't a central place with a comprehensive listing of bronze plaques and memorials. Operation Rediscover is solving this situation by suggesting three venues: newspapers, Waymarking.com and my Facebook page, [Operation Rediscover](#). You can use all three by rearranging the same information in different ways.

A good story in a local paper is a great way to share the story about your plaque or memorial. Newspapers are constantly searching for material to publish, especially inspiring local stories. You can submit articles to them yourself, but I think the best coverage comes from them writing it.

Before you approach them, assemble all the information you have accumulated answering the who, what, when, where and why questions, as well as some background information about yourself. This will make their job easier and more likely to print it.

Every paper has a section containing the names and phone numbers of the editors and publisher. Call the managing editor's office, explain your story and ask for the phone number of the appropriate reporter. Call him or her, describe the project and offer to eMail your information. If this is done ahead of the preservation treatment, they can get action photos, which will add interest to the story.

Waymarking.com is a site dedicated to cataloging interesting sites around the world, among which are plaque and memorials. This site can help you locate them if you don't know where they are, and provides a way to spread the news about ones you discover if they don't have it listed. See below for an example how I created a post on their site.

[Operation Rediscover](#) is my Facebook page dedicated to bronze plaques and memorials. You are invited to write your story on my wall (please include

photos), or, if the newspaper article is available online, post a link to the article. Copy the address and paste it in the “link” option. You can also include your own comments.

There may be other ways to publicize information that are just as effective, or more so. If you know of any, please share them.

How to use Waymarking.com

Waymarking.com “provides tools for you to catalog, mark and visit interesting and useful locations around the world.” It is free and easy to use. To date they have over 315702 waymarks in 1020 categories widely ranging from pay phones, penny smashers, covered bridges, churches, as well as bronze plaques and memorials.

When you navigate there, you can find everything they have listed about a particular area by entering the zip code in the “Find Waymarks” search box. You can also refine your search with key words, GPS coordinates, etc. When you select an item, a map of the area, including satellite and hybrid views also comes up.

Another important feature of this site is that you can post your own discoveries. I’ll take you through the process with one of mine, to show you see how easy it is.

While visiting the U.S. Army Transportation Museum at Fort Eustis, VA, I noticed a plaque dedicated to General Frank S. Besson near the front entrance. Waymarking.com didn’t have this plaque listed, so I took pictures, got GPS coordinates and did some research online about General Besson.

You have to register in order to create a post, but it doesn’t take long and the basic membership is free.

In the upper right hand corner you will find a link “Post A New Waymark.” You are required to select a category. I selected “Specific Veteran Memorials,” uploaded two photos and filled in the blanks with descriptions, GPS coordinates, address and other references. I also included two links that give more complete details about General Besson and his career.

You are given the option to save and edit the page if you need to return after doing more research. After the final publishing option I was sent an eMail note saying that they were reviewing the post before it became final. About a day later I received notice that it had been published.

It does take time to do all of this (with the research, taking and uploading pictures, posting the entry, one to two hours), but my life has been broadened by learning about General Besson's interesting life. I also have the satisfaction of sharing what I learned in a world-wide venue.

Since plaques are limited to how many words they contain, Waymarking.com allows them to expand their message and influence, helping them to fulfill their mission in a much greater way.

Here is a link to my post about General Besson, please check it out::

http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMBB7A_General_Frank_S_Besson_Jr

FAQs

Q. I simply can't do the preservation treatment, can I pay someone to do it?

A. There is a growing number of people involved with maintaining and caring for bronze plaques & memorials professionally. The best way to locate them is to contact a local cemetery or memorial company. And, even though you may not have done the actual preservation work, you can still share what you have learned.

Please check [Operation Rediscover](#) for stories, the latest information and to post any questions you may have.