



# ENON VALLEY ECHO

July 19th Enon Valley Community Day Special Edition

'And John was baptizing in Aenon... because there was much water there.' John 3:23

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## Preserving a Historic Symbol of Pennsylvania Pride: The Restoration of Enon Valley's Keystone Marker

Driving around our beautiful commonwealth, you may have spotted these antiquated blue signs at the edge of towns. Darlington has one, New Galilee has one, Mount Jackson has one, and, yes, even our borough of Enon Valley has one. These are called keystone markers.

The keystone markers were one of Pennsylvania's answers to the Good Roads Movement of the turn of the 20th century. The Good Roads Movement was the rural component of the Progressive Movement which advocated for national and local governments to improve the dirt or gravel roads to paved roads in order to achieve higher social and economic benefits like the cities enjoyed.

Installed in the 1920's by PennDOT's predecessor, the Pennsylvania Department of Highways, these blue and yellow cast iron signs marked the gateways of every city, borough, and village along state numbered highways across the Commonwealth.

They show more information about the town they serve that the current white and blue sign we're familiar with, indicating the year the town was founded, a brief description on how the town got its name, and the distance in miles to next town on the journey. The town name version is the most well-known but there were also other variants to mark waterways, municipal borders, trailheads, and directions to various cities and towns.

The Pennsylvania Department of Highways also expanded the use of the keystone signs to mark dangerous curves, speed limits, crossings, parking restrictions, and even school zones and hospital zones. These keystone markers were painted yellow or white with black lettering to help drivers see the signs more clearly. The Pennsylvania Department of Highways initially ordered 1700 of these keystone signs for their debut placement on Pennsylvania's highways in 1922.

At the same time, they were rolling out painted lines on the newly paved roads, including the yellow center lines and checkerboard lines above and below the word "SLOW" to indicate sharp curves ahead. It was the only comprehensive road program of its kind in the country at the time and the keystone marker was its most notable symbol.

The keystone-shaped signs acted as a way for Pennsylvania to show its pride and helped to cement its reputation to the outside world as the "Keystone State."

One hundred years ago, thousands of keystone markers dotted the countryside, lining famous highways such as the Lincoln Highway (US 30) and the National Road (US 40) and other state roads in between. Now there are only about 600 of them left in the commonwealth but one organization is working hard to



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change that.

The Keystone Marker Trust is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the historical preservation of keystone markers, of which the group refers to as "A proud symbol of a proud state." They believe that remembering the past through these symbolic signs will reorient community and economic development in the Commonwealth toward a better future. "The markers once showcased the power and pride we had in our state," Their website states. "Their restoration and replacement re-affirms those virtues as a confident foundation for investment in all the ways we need."

Their website, [www.keystonemarkertrust.org](http://www.keystonemarkertrust.org), is also home to their work-in-progress keystone marker database designed to help people locate keystone markers both past and present.

The group is working with PennDOT and Pennsylvania municipalities to help restore existing keystone markers and create replicas to replace ones lost to time. The fragile cast iron signs are easily broken in traffic accidents and PennDOT desires a version that has a breakaway post like modern road signs for safety.

PennDOT has historically kept their distance from the keystone markers and wants little to do with them. They encourage boroughs and townships to take the markers under their wing, if they want to preserve them. The Keystone Marker Trust advocates the same thing with their Adopt-a-Sign program, working with schools and historical societies to build local and state history programs around a marker in their respective area.

The Keystone Marker Trust believes that restoring keystone markers show visitors to our cities and towns that this is a place where the people care about their town.

By remembering our past, we have a great appreciation knowing that we are standing on the shoulders of giants and that, hopefully, will serve as inspiration for us regular people to continue carry that torch and shine through the muck

and mire of apathy our communities find themselves in. And, perhaps, through our actions, the pride we build taking care of our community will inspire others and carry that momentum for generations to come.

The Enon Valley Community Historical Society agrees which is why we reached out to the KMT to have Enon Valley's keystone marker restored.

In January, Mike Wintermantel, from the KMT attended our historical society meeting and gave us a presentation on the Keystone Marker Trust, the keystone markers, and the restoration process. Mike has restored many keystone markers all across Western Pennsylvania, including Darlington, Mount Jackson, New Galilee, Beaver Falls, Wampum, New Wilmington, Industry, Ellwood City, Fairview, Ohioville, Aliquippa, and many more.

Our keystone marker was removed from the park in early March and Mike began the restoration. Updates to the restoration's progress were relayed through our society's Facebook page, which by the way, if you enjoy learning about the history of our region and care about preserving it for future generations, give our society a follow @enonhistoricalsociety to keep up to date with all the activities we do throughout the year.

The newly restored marker will be unveiled at Enon Valley Community Day's opening ceremony 9:00am, Saturday, July 19 at the Memorial Park,

the corner of Main, State, and Cass streets in Enon Valley Borough. It's perfectly timed for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the paving of the Battery B Memorial Highway, which was also a product of the Good Roads Movement.

So, the next time you're driving around our beautiful Commonwealth, see how many of these symbols of Pennsylvania pride you can find on your travels and take time to remember the greatness of Pennsylvania's history and pass it on for our future generations.

Also, let our society know if you spot any stray Enon Valley keystone markers lying around or any photos of the markers around the borough. Keystone markers would have been at each entrance to the town on a state route so we speculate there was probably at least two more that Enon Valley would have had that look similar to the one we are restoring.

I say "similar to" because the town name and distance in miles number at the top would have been different depending on where the marker was located, meaning that each keystone marker was individually unique.

The one we are restoring was located on 351 on Vine Street towards New Galilee. Our best guess for the others is that there was likely one on 551/Main Street around Kossuth Street towards Darlington that indicated the next town was also New Castle and one on the 351/551 concurrence on State Street along the hillside before reaching the Masonic Lodge that likely said either Darlington or New Galilee.

We do not have any other information on the other markers at all but if you come across anything, feel free to pass it our way so we can continue to preserve our community's history.

Happy looking and drive safely!

