

Sept. 10, 2025

Trails Across America: Grant Funding for Historical Markers That Elevate Trailside History

Presented by:

**Rails to Trails Conservancy
William G. Pomeroy Foundation**



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 - Live transcription is enabled for this webinar.
 - Recording and slides will be made available after the webinar.
 - Streaming on LinkedIn live.

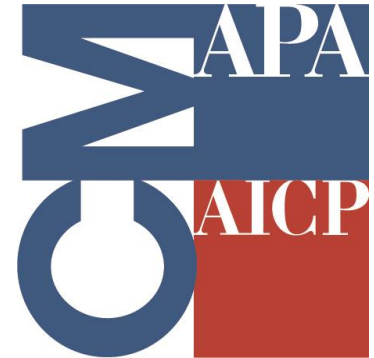
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**Trails Across America: Grant Funding for Historical Markers That Elevate
Trailside History**

Event # **9317064**

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TrailNation Summit

HOSTED BY RAILS TO TRAILS CONSERVANCY

October 27-29, 2025
Cleveland, Ohio



Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail | Photo by Jason Cohn

Register Today: railstotrails.org/trailnation

Why Is Historical Elevation So Powerful?

- **Sparks Identity/Shapes Perception**—Immediately enabling someone to think about the space differently than before
- **Historical/Cultural Connections**—Spur relationships with a space beyond the active or physical
- **Spur Empathy to Place!**—Once you relate to something, you feel attached and want it to have remembrance.
- **Elevates Local Relevance That Exists Long After You're Off the Trail**—Inspiring further use, visitation, support and advocacy
- **Relationship Building**—Meaningful connections inspiring solidarity, advocacy and storytelling



Danville Bicycle Club in the 1890s, responsible for the first recorded rail-trail in America, the J. Manley Robbins Trail in Pa. | Courtesy Montour Area Historical Society

Peru: America's "Circus City"

Nickel Plate Trail (Peru, Indiana)

This partnership with the 37.8-mile Nickel Plate Trail and the International Circus Hall of Fame, located on the former winter headquarters (1880s to 1940s) of one of the largest circus conglomerates in the country, highlighted the City of Peru as "Circus City," also called the "Circus Capital of the World."

Learn more: rtc.li/circus-city

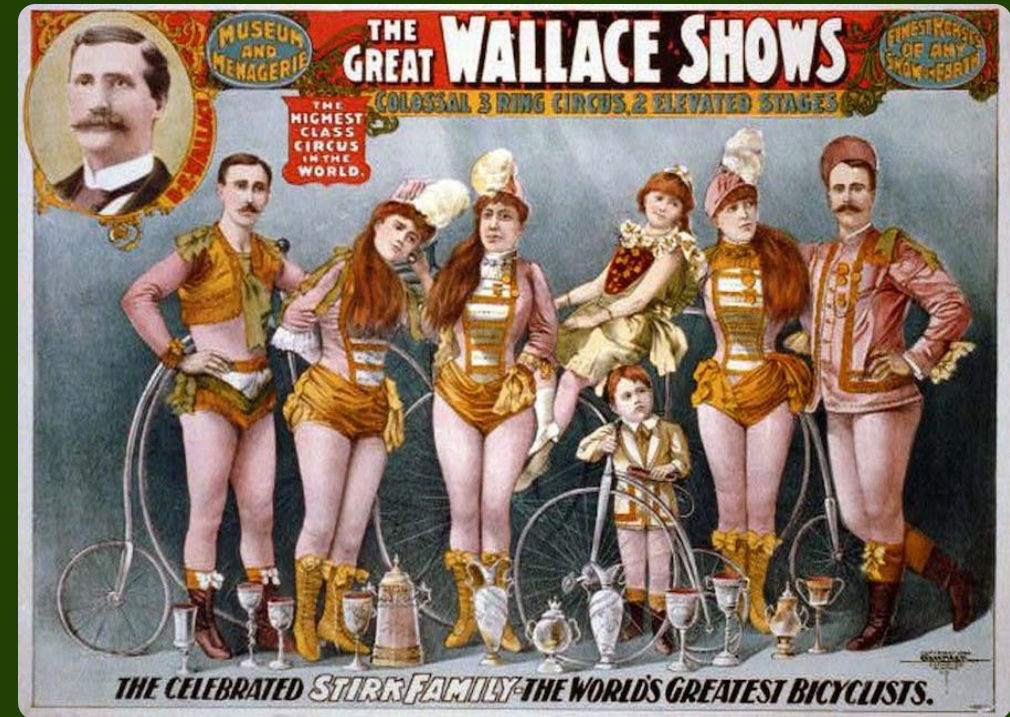
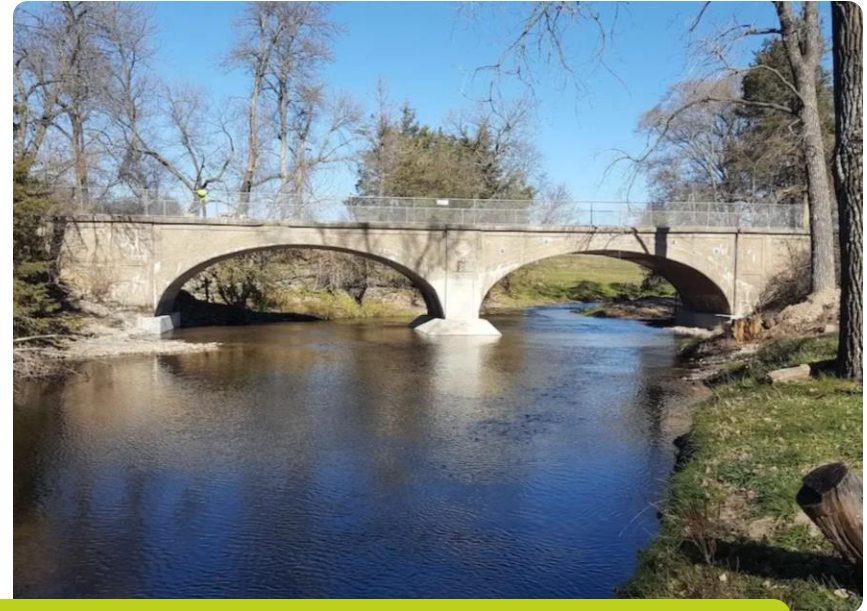


Photo credits: Clockwise, from top: Courtesy Library of Congress Collection; Courtesy Nickel Plate Trail; Courtesy International Circus Hall of Fame

Local/Natl. Historical Program Crossover

- **Transportation Alternatives (Federal Funding): Official Category** - “Historic Preservation and Rehabilitation of Historic Transportation Facilities”
 - TRADE: railstotrails.org/trade
- **Crossover With Federal/State Historical Preservation and Granting Agencies:**
 - **National Historic Landmarks Program**
nps.gov/orgs/1582
 - **National Register for Historic Places**
nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/
 - **State Historic Preservation Offices**
rtc.li/state-his-pres-offices



*Brandon Bridge Along the Cedar Valley Nature Trail in Iowa |
Courtesy Black Hawk County Conservation*

Trailside Historical Subject Matter

Criteria: Age (On or Before 1956), Historical Significance, Integrity

- **People—Tied to an Event and Location Along the Trail, Building or Place:** What was their contribution—locally, regionally or nationally?
- **Events—Tied to a Location Along the Trail, Building or Place:** What extremely unique or well-known event happened to mark that place?
- **Buildings and Structures—Historically Significant Design or Contribution/Involvement in Shaping the Community or Nation**
- **Geological or Geographic Features:** Thinking Outside the Box (rtc.li/geological-unconformity)

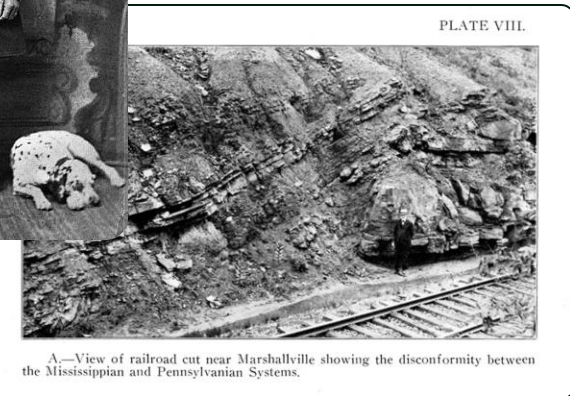
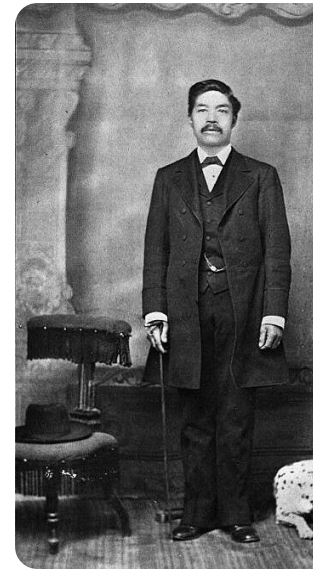
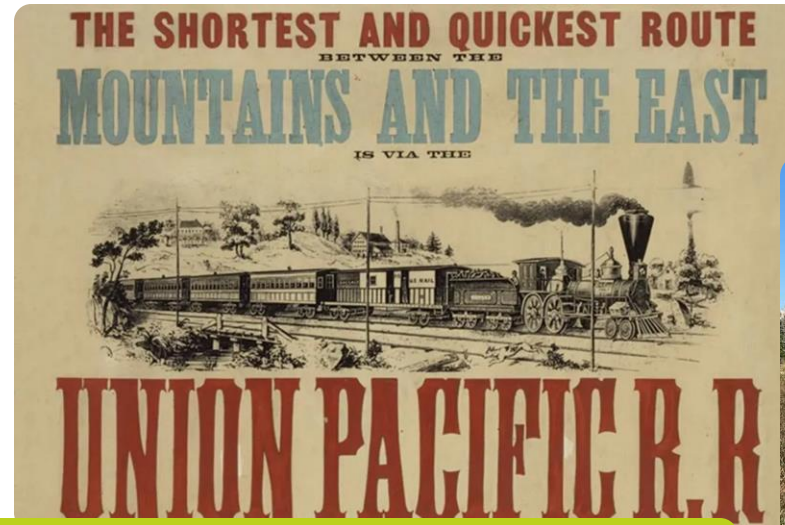


Photo credits: Clockwise, from left: Edward Day Cohota | Courtesy Cape Ann Museum; Historical Nelson Story Mill | Courtesy Trust for Public Land; Geological Unconformity | Courtesy Ohio Geological Survey

Harnessing Partnerships

- Local Historical Societies
- State Historical Societies
- Museums and Halls of Fame
- Homesteads and Family Foundations
- Local Subject-Matter Experts
- Long-Time Residents and Business Owners
- Libraries/Librarians
- National and State Geological Surveys



1867 Union Pacific Advertisement Poster | Courtesy Union Pacific Railroad Museum (Council Bluffs)



Trails Across America Application Process

For full information, go to: railstotrails.org/grants/#marker

- rtc.li/trails-across-america-helpful-hints
 1. Submit your idea (Form = 20 minutes).
 2. RTC will contact you for collaborative planning/research and validation.
 3. RTC will submit an LOI to Pomeroy Foundation.
 4. Final application submission (upon approval by Pomeroy Foundation), including primary resources and a permission letter.

RTC, Pomeroy and Trail Org. confirm final text.
 5. Supplemental Story Development
 6. Order to Foundry/Delivery/Installation
 7. *Promotion and launch plans? Let us know!*



Center Point Depot Marker | Courtesy Cedar Valley Nature Trail

Example: Edward Day Cohota

Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail (Valentine, Nebraska)

Edward Day Cohota was one of 58 men of Chinese descent to fight in the U.S. Civil War. He went on to become a successful businessman with a family in Valentine and fought for U.S. Citizenship after realizing he did not have it, but was denied. His marker is along the trail by Mt. Hope Cemetery, where he is buried.

Learn more: rtc.li/traillink-edward-day-cohota

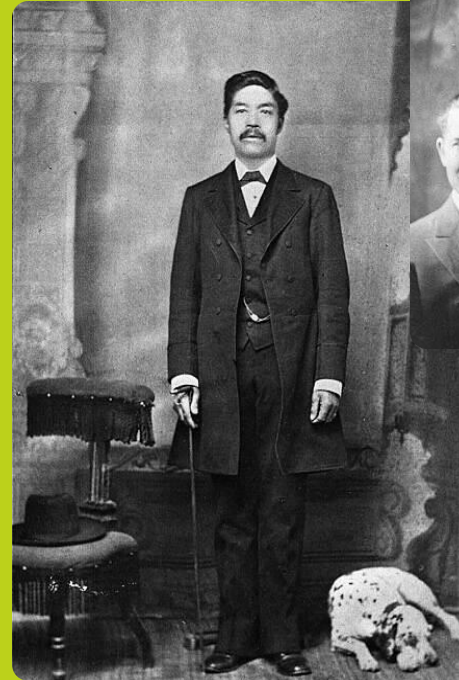


Photo credits: Counterclockwise, from top: Edward Day Cohota (middle) and family; Edward Day Cohota | Courtesy Cape Ann Museum (2); Edward Day Cohota marker | Courtesy Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail

Example: Feed & Grain Mill

Heart of Ohio Trail (Centerburg, Ohio)

The arrival of the railroad in Centerburg brought many opportunities to the fledgling community in 1873, and businesses, restaurants, services and liverys began to pop up. The building at 108 N. Hartford Ave., built in 1899, played a role in Centerburg's agricultural activities for 100+ years. Today it stands as a legacy of the area's farming heritage.

Learn more: rtc.li/feed-grain-mill

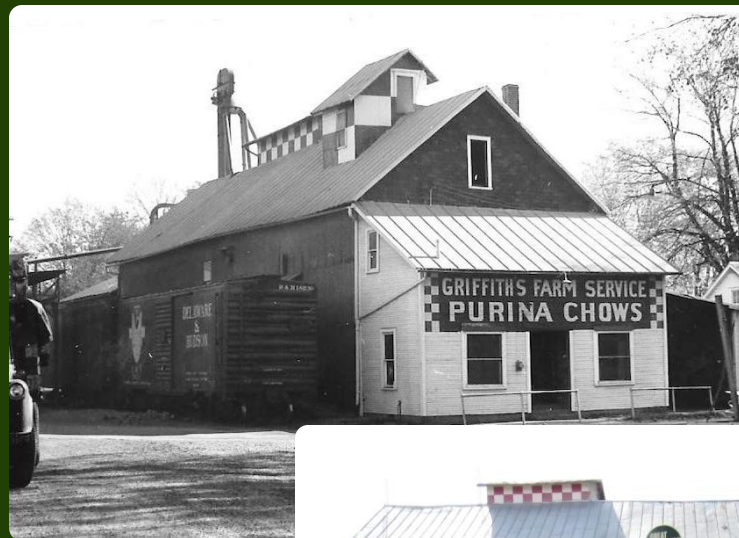


Photo credits: Clockwise, from top: Centerburg's historical feed and grain mill at 108 N. Hartford Ave., now a host for local businesses | Courtesy Griffith Family; Public unveiling of the Pomeroy marker for the mill building | Courtesy Gloria Parsisson


Elevate Your Story!

- Create stories and content that engage!
 - QR Codes
 - Online Storytelling
 - Media and Promotion!
 - Learn more: rtc.li/pomeroy-marker-stories
- For additional inspiration:
 - railstotrails.org/focus_cat/history-happened-here/
 - TrailLink: History Along the Great American Rail-Trail: traillink.com/historic-places/

AMERICA'S TRAILS

For Some 60 Years, Peru, Indiana, Was America's "Circus City"


By: Robert Cline
October 25, 2023



HAGENBECK-WALLACE MAIN ENTRANCE TO CIRCUS | PHOTO BY M.D. MCCARTER, COURTESY INTERNATIONAL CIRCUS HALL OF FAME, USED WITH PERMISSION.

Peru is known as the Circus Capital of the World for a big reason. It really was.

Starting in 1884 when a Livery Stable owner named Ben Wallace took his first circus on the road, Peru began a circus winter quarters legacy that would last 60 years.





William G. Pomeroy Foundation

Mission

We are committed to supporting the celebration and preservation of community history, and working to improve the probability of finding appropriate donor matches or other life-saving treatments for blood cancer patients.



Bill Pomeroy at dedication in Skaneateles, N.Y.



Pomeroy Marker Grant Programs



- Signature Programs
- Partner Programs

Markers Benefit Communities



- Educate the public
- Pride of place
- Promote tourism
- Enrich student learning
- Dedication ceremonies
- Media coverage



Trails Across America



- Eligible subjects: historic events, people, and places up to 1956
- Markers placed along RTC-defined multiuse trails
- Goal: up to 20 new markers awarded each year nationwide



What Makes an Application Successful?



- ✓ Follow the guidelines & criteria
- ✓ Primary sources & historical accuracy
- ✓ Land permission & marker location
- ✓ Review our style guide
- ✓ Explore our marker map for ideas

National Education Program



Your Questions



wgpfoundation.org

Follow us: @wgpfoundation



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Questions?



Thank you!

Register for the TrailNation Summit: railstotrails.org/trailnation/summit2025

