



## TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION CERTIFICATE OF MERIT PROGRAM CRITERIA

Begun in 1975, the Tennessee Historical Commission Certificate of Merit Program recognizes exemplary work by individuals, groups, organizations, corporations, or governmental entities to further promote historic preservation or the study of history in Tennessee. The Tennessee Historical Commission presents these awards each May during National Preservation Month. The nominees must have completed the task(s) or project(s) for which the certificate is awarded by the time of nomination. Nominees may be individuals or public or private entities.

For the awards to be presented in May, the deadline for receipt of completed nomination supporting documentation is December 31 of the preceding year. Thus, for example, the deadline for tasks or projects completed in 2026 is December 31, 2026, and awards based upon these nominations will be presented in May, 2027. Nominations will be reviewed first by staff and then by a committee of Commissioners, called the Awards Committee, which committee shall present its recommendations at the February THC meeting for final decision by the entire Commission.

Absent unusual circumstances, there shall be no more than ten Historic Preservation Awards, ten Book or Public Programming Awards, and five Commissioners' Special Commendations presented each year. It is anticipated that in most years the number of awards presented in each category will be considerably smaller than the maximum. If, in the judgment of the Commission, more than one individual or entity made a significant and indispensable contribution to a task or project that is worthy of an award, the Commission may present a certificate to each such individual or entity irrespective of whether or not such individual or entity designated as the nominee in the nomination that was submitted. All certificates that stem from a particular task or project shall count as one award for purposes of determining the number of awards being presented.

### Categories:

- I. **Historic Preservation Awards:** Recognize the preservation, restoration, or rehabilitation of a historic or archeological site, preservation leadership, preservation planning, publication(s) related to historic preservation, public programming, or research (including field survey activities)
  - To be considered for a Preservation Award, the specific project that is the subject of the nomination must meet the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
  - To be considered for a Restoration Award, the project that the nominee was involved with must meet the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Restoration.

- To be considered for a Rehabilitation Award, the project that is the subject of the nomination must meet the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- To be considered for a Preservation Leadership Award, the person being nominated must advance the identification, appreciation, and protection of Tennessee's historic and/or archaeological resources through demonstrable leadership in the areas of preservation planning, survey and inventory or identification and evaluation, or the protection of those resources.
- To be considered for a Preservation Planning Award, a planner must have planned a project that meets the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation Planning.

The foregoing eligibility requirements establish the baseline. To receive an award, the individual or entity must also be distinguished by a high level of achievement, a singular accomplishment, or a significant body of work over time. The relevant task(s) or project(s) must have been successful in preserving, restoring, or rehabilitating a property. For detailed information on the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's standards for various types of historical projects, see [http://www.nps.gov//hps/tps/standard\\_guidelines.htm](http://www.nps.gov//hps/tps/standard_guidelines.htm).

**II. Book or Public Programming Awards:** Recognize notable achievements toward advancing the study of Tennessee history through certain types of books or through public programming

- To be considered for a Book Award, the nominee must be the author, editor, or publisher of: (1) a book that discernibly advances the study of Tennessee history by focusing on a town, city, or county in Tennessee or a region of Tennessee, or (2) a children's book that is exemplary in communicating some aspect of Tennessee history. In contrast, the Tennessee History Book Award, which is co-sponsored by the Commission and the Tennessee Library Association, recognizes annually a single book relating to the broader scope of Tennessee history and expressly excludes children's books.
- To be considered for a Public Programming Award, the person or entity must have designed and produced an exhibit, site interpretation, essay or article, or similar project that discernibly advances the appreciation of Tennessee history.

The foregoing should be considered eligibility requirements and are not necessarily sufficient to receive an award.

**III. Commissioners' Special Commendations:** Recognize achievements that relate to the promotion of historic preservation or history but do not satisfy all of the criteria for a Historic Preservation Award or a Book or Public Programming Award, as described above

Examples include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) involvement with a noteworthy preservation, restoration, or rehabilitation project that is of high quality but does not satisfy the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's standards, and (2) particularly significant efforts in raising awareness, and/or funds, for preservation of a historic structure that ultimately was not saved.