

FSMS News March “Florida Surveyor”

A New Award category has been approved by the FSMS Awards Committee for 2026

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“Historical Monument Award”

The background of this Award came from the FSMS Annual Conference in 2025 when I gave out a Presidential Award to several Surveyors that had located historical monuments from 1855 that were part of the original U. S. Coastal Surveys of Florida by then Superintendent A. D. Bache, the great-grandson of Benjamin Franklin.

In order to improve the accuracy of the U. S. Coastal Surveys, there were two precise baselines established in South Florida, one on Key Biscayne and one on Cape Sable in 1855 within two months of each other. Both were 4 miles in length and special monuments were set on both ends and every mile in between with extreme accuracy and precision. The North Base monument of the Key Biscayne baseline was found in 1972, it was researched and documented and then in the 1980's, Surveyors of the then FSPLS collaborated with the National Park Service, FDOT and the Airforce Recovery team to locate, find, and recover the South Base monument which was about 300 feet offshore under 12-15 feet of water due to erosion. There were multiple articles about this discovery and the recovery of the two end bases which were massive solid granite obelisks and stamped 1855 and A.D. Bache on its sides. However, the discovery of the individual Mile posts, which were also granite but much smaller by other surveyors in the 1990's was never documented properly or reported. Those Surveyors, Ted Riggs and John Liptak were recognized in 2025 with a FSMS Presidential Award

In connection with the Coastal Surveys in 2024 & 2025 two other Surveyors went looking for the monuments for the Cape Sable Baseline. Mike Bartholomew and his son found the East Base monument which was a nine-inch diameter cast iron screw pile with a brass disk on top stamped A. D. Bache. His search continued west two miles looking for the Mid-Base monument. With much effort and digging, he was unable to locate it at the time, but felt he was close. A few months later Brion Yancy, his father, and a couple of other Surveyors did another search for the Mid Base and finally found it within a couple of feet from where Mike Bartholomew had been looking. That Monument turned out to be a solid granite monument with a brass plug on top. These Surveyors were also recognized in 2025 with a FSMS Presidential Award.

The extraordinary effort, research and significance of the monuments were what set these discoveries apart from our daily surveying activities and why I felt it important enough to recognize those involved with a special Presidential Award to commemorate the occasions. I did my own research and put together a presentation showing what was done to find these monuments and the

research behind the scenes. This included notes from A.D Bache's report to Congress in 1855, the instruments and procedures they used to measure the baselines accurately, and the background on the Screw piles for the Cape Sable Baseline. I also included notes and pictures of the recovery of the South base on Key Biscayne from the 1980's articles, pictures of the mile post monuments from the 1990's and newer pictures from Mike and Brion's discovery of the Cape Sable East and Mid Base monuments.

After the Annual Conference was over I kept thinking about these monuments and how many other Historical Monuments are still out there and thought that we should do something about it. So, I brought it to the attention of the FSMS Awards Committee and proposed that we make this an annual Award for the Oldest Historical Monument found each year.

I believe that there are many significant monuments out there with their own stories to tell, that have already been found by many of our members and peers but are only documented in their field books, on a survey they performed, or just found and referenced. We would like to bring them back to life and share their importance before they are lost to development or time. Our history as Surveyors and the footsteps of those who came before us, their records, the monuments they placed in the ground, as well as the evidence they left behind are part of our heritage. The field notes, plats, surveys and maps produced with careful consideration and effort to ensure the boundaries would stand the test of time.

I believe strongly that this Award is significant and important to all of us as a celebration to our heritage and our profession. I had the Award specially designed and built to show its importance and the significance to our history and of the monuments it represents. Its outer frame is made of oak and glazed with six coats of clear polyurethane to protect its surface. I felt that the centerpiece of the Award should be its focal point.

One of the crews I was working with before I retired from Craven Thompson & Associates was retracing a Section out in Township 48 South, Range 33 East, part of a Dependent Resurvey of that Township by the Government Land Office (GLO) in 1939 for the boundary of the Seminole Indian Reservation. As they were searching for this particular section corner they discovered the GLO monument set in 1939 had been pulled out of the ground and was just laying there several feet from its calculated position with no visible evidence of where it had been or why someone would do this. It was in an area that was relatively undisturbed with no fences or other boundary evidence. It was covered in dirt and algae and looked as if it had been there several years. I had the crew retrieve it and I brought it home. It weighed 75 pounds, and was a 6-inch diameter concrete monument, 37-inches long with a 3-inch brass disk on top with the GLO stamping, section, township, range and 1939 date. I pressure washed the outside of the entire monument and then cleaned and polished the brass disk on top to show off its important information.

After holding on to this important monument for several weeks, I realized that this would make the perfect centerpiece for the Award, so I removed the top four inches of this GLO monument, and it now rests in the Award for everyone to see. Whoever wins the Award each year will be able to take it with them to display in their office for the next year, but will need to make arrangements for its return to the FSMS Tallahassee Office at least one month before the next Annual Conference. Upon return to FSMS each year, the winner's name will be stamped into a brass plate and added to the monument showing the year they won.

See the Award below which is still in progress, waiting for brass plates, and the attached Criteria for applying for it.



Award Criteria: “Historical Monument Award”

Purpose:

Encourage participation from Members across the State to search for and document historical monuments that may still exist before they are lost or destroyed by development or other environmental factors. The monument(s) must have been found within the past two years, so that some recent findings can be included.

Definition:

Historical monument: Must be a minimum of 50 years old. It can be a PLSS/GLO/BLM, NGS/USGS, RECORD PLAT, and/or other HISTORICAL monument that can be identified by Map, field notes, or other such records to properly identify and prove the importance of the monument.

Basic Criteria:

1. The Monument must be documented and verified in the public or historical records (field notes, maps, and dates)
2. You must take a minimum of two pictures.
 - one of location standing a minimum of 3 feet away from the monument and facing a cardinal direction.
 - one of monument face that is readable.
3. Collect State Plane Coordinates, identify Zone, and Latitude and Longitude with GPS if possible.
4. Must include a brief story of the monument/corner with the description of your search, methods and why this monument was needed or searched for.
5. If it is a PLSS/GLO/BLM monument then a CCR should be referenced with the found monument or created and sent to FDEP.
6. If it is an NGS monument then NGS documentation and pictures should be updated on the NGS website.
7. Notify FSMS to add to the “Florida Surveyor” magazine.

Potential Categories:

1. **Oldest Historical Monument/Corner:** Other than PLSS/GLO/BLM, NGS/USGS, or RECORD PLAT and verified by historical record documentation or stamped on monument.
2. **Oldest PLSS/GLO/BLM Monument/Corner:** Found original and verified by historical record documentation and/or stamped on monument.
3. **Oldest NGS/USGS Monument:** Found and verified by historical record documentation or stamped on monument.

- 4. Oldest Recorded Plat Monument/Corner:** Found and verified by historical record documentation and/or stamped on monument.

The Winner:

The winner of this award each year will be able to take home the Official Award Monument Plaque for one year +/- for display in their office(s). They will need to make arrangements for the return of the Award Plaque to the FSMS Office in Tallahassee at least one month before the next annual Conference. Upon return to the FSMS Office the name of that individual(s) or company will be added to the side of the Plaque in recognition of their accomplishment.

Submittal Requirements:

For recognition and eligibility for one of the awards categories at the Annual Conference, all submittals need to include an award documentation package and be sent to FSMS no less than 90 days prior to the FSMS Annual Conference.

The Award

The special case is made of Oak, and the centerpiece is the top of an original GLO monument set in 1939 and found pulled and laid over on top of the ground in 2025 near the Section, Township, and Range stamped on top. Out of respect for the importance and history of the GLO surveys, the monument was cleaned and polished and made part of this important award in recognition of history of Surveyors of Florida and created for Florida Surveying and Mapping Society.

