

From: FITZIE HEIMDAHL [fitzie.heimdahl@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:fitzie.heimdahl@wisconsinhistory.org)  
Subject: Governor Vernon W. Thomson Wisconsin State Historical Marker  
Date: Jun 2, 2023 at 9:19:33 AM  
To: [bellmanrj@charter.net](mailto:bellmanrj@charter.net)

Hello Mr. Bellman,

My name is Fizie Heimdahl. I coordinate the State Historical Markers Program through the Wisconsin State Historical Society. Thank you for your interest in a Wisconsin State Historical Marker. Staff has reviewed your pre-application, and has determined that your topic meets the criteria of the Wisconsin State Historical Markers Program

When you are ready, please submit your completed final marker application and application fee of \$250 to the following address:

Wisconsin Historical Society  
State Historical Markers Program, Rm 454  
816 State Street. Madison, WI 53706

I have also included a few template letters of agreement as you work with the City of Richland Center.

Based on our current marker applications under review, it will take at least six months for staff to review new applications. The estimated timeframe for the production of new markers is at least six months from the date your marker order is placed by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

We are excited to see the story of this important state figure shared with the public.

Sincerely,

-Fizie Heimdahl

Fizie Heimdahl (he/him)

State Historical Markers Program Coordinator

Wisconsin Historical Society-----

(715) 471-0770

[fitzie.heimdahl@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:fitzie.heimdahl@wisconsinhistory.org)



WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

## WISCONSIN HISTORICAL MARKER APPLICATION FORM

This application is required to obtain approval for official State of Wisconsin historical markers. The Wisconsin Historical Markers Program is administered by the Wisconsin Historical Society's Local History-Field Services program.

State Register of Historic Places plaques no longer require Wisconsin Historical Society approval. If your home is on the State Register, order State Register plaques directly from SEWAH Studios at 1-888-55-SEWAH.

**This application form must be filled out completely. Incomplete or ineligible marker applications will be returned to the applicant within 30 days of receipt by the Society.**

**The applicant is responsible for:**

- Providing all research documentation & supporting materials for this application.
- Funding the historical marker.
- Maintaining the historical marker

Please allow sufficient time for your order.

The marker text requires approval of Wisconsin Historical Society staff. Because there is often a backlog of pending applications and staff is limited, please allow up to 6 months for our staff to review your application. Once approved, the Society will order your marker from SEWAH Studios. As of January 2023, the production time for ALL state historical markers is estimated to be six months. We advise you not to schedule a marker dedication ceremony until the marker is in your possession.

**Do not submit payment until invoiced.**

All historical markers are manufactured by SEWAH Studios in Marietta, Ohio. Once this application has been approved, the Society will place the order for manufacture of the historical marker. SEWAH will invoice the applicant directly once the application process is complete. The marker will be delivered directly to the applicant.

### Criteria for Historical Marker Topics

Wisconsin historical markers identify, commemorate and honor the important people, places, and events that have contributed to the state's rich heritage. The Wisconsin Historical Markers Program is a vital education tool, informing people about the most significant aspects of Wisconsin's past.

Markers should describe one of the following aspects of Wisconsin's history: history, architecture, culture, archaeology, ethnic associations, geology, natural history, or legends. If your narrative text is about a person in history, we encourage you to include the person's birth and death dates, a chronology of the important events from the person's life, and the person's influence or significant contribution to the national, state or local community. If your narrative text is about an event in history, we encourage you to include the time, date and place of the event, any people or groups associated with event, information on how the event developed, and the event's influence or significant contribution to the national, state or local community.

While developing your narrative text, we encourage you to document your facts and dates with footnotes. You will be required to develop an annotated bibliography and attach photocopies of your primary and secondary research resources with this application. Avoid words like "first," "oldest," "unique," or "only" unless there is irrefutable documentation. The name of the current owner of the property or the name of any living person cannot be listed in the narrative text. The Society reserves the right to reject a marker application that it deems offensive, either to general good taste or to a specific group of people.

The Society will consider the approval of marker applications if the applications meet any of the following criteria:

- The property is listed in the State or National Register of Historic Places.
- The site is associated with the events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history.
- The site is associated with the lives of persons no longer living who have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of history and culture.
- The site embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, style, period or method of construction or architecture; represents the work of a master; or possesses high artistic value.
- The site yields, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.
- The site is associated with ethnic groups who have made distinctive and significant contributions to history.
- The site embodies the characteristics of the State, representing significant aspects of the physical or natural history of the earth.
- The site is representative of popular stories or myths that, although not verifiable, are significant to history and culture.

WISCONSIN STATE HISTORICAL MARKER APPLICATION FORM

1 - Name of Applicant	CITY OF RICHLAND CENTER
2 - Proposed Title of Marker	VERNON W. THOMSON, GOVERNOR AND CONGRESSMAN
3 - Proposed Location of Marker — Be precise. Photos of the proposed location and a map with the marker location shown, and property parcel number are required for final location approval.	
Property Name (if applicable)	KROUSKOP PARK
Address	JUNCTION OF US HWY 14 and Hwy 80 <sup>(1/2 mi. S and</sup>
City, State, Zip	RICHLAND CENTER, WISC. 53581 <sup>Orange St.</sup>
County	

4 - Owner of Property Upon Which the Marker is to be Erected — Markers may be located on either public or private lands. The site selected for the marker must be accessible to the public and visible from a public right-of-way. Provide the name of the property owner below.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Property	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Property
Official's Name: MAYOR TODD COPPERNOLL	Property Owner's Name:
Title: MAYOR	Address:
Institution: CITY COUNCIL	City, State & Zip:
Telephone: 608-604-5399 (Mayor's Cell) 608-647-3466 (CITY CLERK)	Telephone:
Email:	Email:

Written Permissions Required — For markers placed within a public right-of-way, please attach a letter of approval from the appropriate transportation official or governing body that has jurisdiction over that public right-of-way.  
If the marker is to be placed on private property not owned by the applicant, please attach a letter of approval from the property owner. The letter should grant permission for the historical marker to be located on their property and permit public access to the marker for as long as the marker stands.

5 - Source of Marker Funding — The applicant is responsible for funding all aspects of the marker, including the purchase, installation, and maintenance costs for the marker. Provide the name of the person or organization that is providing the funds for the marker. Sponsoring organization name can be included at the bottom of marker.

Funder's Name: CITY OF RICHLAND CENTER	Telephone: 608-647-3466
Address: 450 SOUTH MAIN STREET RICHLAND CENTER	City, State & Zip: RICHLAND CENTER, WISC. 53581

6 - Maintenance of Marker — Provide the name of the organization responsible for long-term maintenance and repair of the historical marker below. The organization should be either a private non-profit or a governmental entity willing and able to assume the long-term maintenance of this marker.

Name: CITY OF RICHLAND CENTER PARKS DEPARTMENT	Telephone: 608-647-8108
Address: 1050 North Orange St.	City, State & Zip: Richland Center, Wisc. 53581

**10 – Application submitted by**

Name	Mayor Todd Coppemoll
Organization	City of Richland Center
Address	450 South Main Street
City, State, Zip	Richland Center, Wisconsin 53581
Telephone	608-647-3466 (Clerk's Office)
Email	

I have verified that the above information is accurate and correct to the best of my knowledge. I will fund and maintain the marker, or I am authorized to commit the person or organization named in Section 5 to fund the marker, and I am authorized to commit the person or organization named in Section 6 to the maintenance of the marker. I understand the legal obligations of marker applicants under Wisconsin Statutes.

Applicant signature: XDate: X**11 – Billing address (SEWAH Studios will direct bill marker applicants)**

Name	Mayor Todd Coppemoll
Organization	City of Richland Center
Address	450 South Main Street
City, State, Zip	Richland Center, Wisconsin 53581

**12 – Shipping address if different from billing address.** Commercial addresses open during regular business hours are preferred.

Name	SAME AS #11.
Organization	
Address	
City, State, Zip	

**13 – Submit digital images-** Once the marker has been installed, the applicant must submit three high-resolution digital images (preferably jpegs) of the marker to the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Send applications to:

**Wisconsin Historical Society**  
**State Historical Markers Program, Rm 454**  
**816 State Street Madison, WI 53706**

Email your narrative text to [fitzie.heimdahl@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:fitzie.heimdahl@wisconsinhistory.org)

The Society will review and approve applications that meet the requirements under Wisconsin Statute s. HS 4.06. An application will be approved or disapproved within 180 days of receipt by the Society. Marker installation will be the responsibility of the applicant. Markers will be shipped and invoiced directly from the marker manufacturer to the applicant.

**7 - Research Sources for Narrative Text**—Below please list an annotated bibliography that details the primary and secondary research sources cited to support the historic facts included in your narrative text.

Attach photocopies of all supporting documents with this application. Applications without supporting documents cannot be processed. The Society reserves the right to have a marker removed if additional research finds your marker text to be incorrect.

- The Richland Observer April 7, 1988 Vol. 27, No. 1  
Sec. One, Page One

- Wisconsin Blues Book 1960 pp. 204-206.

- The Milwaukee Journal Sunday, April 13, 1988  
Section B

**8 - Historical Markers Price List** - Official State of Wisconsin historical markers are made of cast aluminum and have raised cream-colored letters on a brown background. All wall-mounted markers have one side. All post-mounted markers have two sides. NOTE: The estimated cost for posts for a city marker (also known as "History on a Stick") is included in the quoted price below. The estimated cost for posts for the larger two-post marker is extra and not included in the estimated price below. Please check with SEWAH Studios directly to determine the cost of posts. Keep in mind that all the costs below are estimates and can change at any time. We strongly recommend that you contact SEWAH directly to ensure you know what the price will be on any marker you decide to order.

Select the appropriate model for your marker from the list below	Size Height x Width	Model	Details	Total Character Count (Characters counts must include spaces between sentences.)	Price *
<input type="radio"/> A	16" x 24"	Small City Marker	5/8" lettering, wall mounted	320	\$800
<input type="radio"/> B	16" x 24"	Small City Marker	5/8" lettering, post mounted, same text each side	320	\$1,070
<input type="radio"/> C	36" x 24"	City Marker	1" lettering, wall mounted	396 11 lines, 36 spaces each	\$1,900
<input type="radio"/> D	36" x 24"	City Marker	5/8" lettering, wall mounted	848 16 lines, 53 spaces each	\$2,040
<input type="radio"/> E	36" x 24"	City Marker	1" lettering, post mounted, same text each side	396 11 lines, 36 spaces each	\$2,150
<input type="radio"/> F	36" x 24"	City Marker	5/8" lettering, post mounted, same text each side	848 16 lines, 53 spaces each	\$2,300
<input type="radio"/> G	36" x 24"	City Marker	1" lettering, post mounted, different text each side	792 11 lines, 36 spaces each 396 characters per side	\$2,450
<input type="radio"/> H	36" x 24"	City Marker	5/8" lettering, post mounted, different text each side	1696 16 lines, 53 spaces each 848 characters per side	\$2,520
<input type="radio"/> I	72" x 54"	Two-Post Marker	1 1/2" lettering, post mounted (Posts not included)	1196 26 lines, 46 spaces each	\$6,020
<input type="radio"/> J	72" x 54"	Two-Post Marker	1" lettering, post mounted (Posts not included)	2006 34 lines, 59 spaces each	\$6,550

\* Price includes shipping. Prices last updated May 2023. Prices subject to change at any time. Verify all pricing with SEWAH Studios at 1-888-55-SEWAH.

**Other costs:**

Post for highway/city markers: \$375 each

Posts for 72 x 54 with pyramidal cap: \$950 pair

Refurbish city/highway markers: \$1200 (includes round trip shipping), with cap repair \$1,450

Refurbish 2-post markers: \$3,250

*Handwritten notes:*



#9  
SUGGESTED MARKER  
NARRATIVE TEXT.

\* Requesting feedback \*  
from Master 1st  
Rec. Sign limit of 396 ~~words~~ characters.  
11 lines + 36 spaces each or one w/  
smaller 5/8" lettering allowing for 848  
characters

## VERNON W. THOMSON, GOVERNOR AND CONGRESSMAN

Wisconsin's 27<sup>th</sup> Governor, Vernon W. Thomson was born in Richland Center on November 5, 1905. He graduated from Richland Center HS in 1923. ~~LATER~~, in 1927, he graduated from UW-Madison and earned his law degree from the UW Law School in 1932.

Governor Thomson's political career spanned five decades and he was a life-long Republican.

- ELECTED TO THE STATE ASSEMBLY 1934-1949, 8 CONSECUTIVE TERMS
- ELECTED ATTORNEY GENERAL 1950, 1952, 1954 <sup>31<sup>th</sup></sup>
- ELECTED GOVERNOR 1957-1959.
- ELECTED TO CONGRESS IN 1960, SERVING THE 3<sup>rd</sup> WISCONSIN DISTRICT UNTIL 1974.

Governor Thomson always considered Richland Center his home and he maintained a close connection with our community. On April 2, 1988, he passed away and he is interred in the local cemetery.

**9 - Suggested marker narrative text**—Type or print your suggested marker narrative text below. Attach additional sheets as necessary. In addition to submitting this application, the Society requests that this narrative text be submitted via email as a Microsoft Word document attachment. All text is subject to editing by the Wisconsin Historical Society.



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COUNTY ROOM  
TREWEE LIBRARY

### VERNON W. THOMSON, 1957-59

No Governor in the history of the state came to the governorship with a longer and more thorough apprenticeship in state affairs than Vernon W. Thomson. All of his life and all of his training are connected with Wisconsin and from 1935 to 1957 when he became Governor he had held a state elective office continually. Unlike 3 of his 4 immediate predecessors he was a man of moderate means.

#### Early Life

Governor Thomson was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin, November 5, 1905, the son of A. A. Thomson and Ella Wallace Thomson. His father's family was among the early settlers of Monroe County. His father was associated with public education as county superintendent of schools, principal of the Richland County Normal School and supervisor for the State Department of Public Instruction. Vernon, one of 4 children, was reared in Richland Center.

After graduating from Richland Center High School, the Governor attended Carroll College in Waukesha from 1923-25 where he played basketball, was a member of the debating team and was active in campus politics. He then transferred to the University of Wisconsin where he worked his way through school, graduating in 1927. From 1927-29 he taught in the Viroqua High School and worked as a substitute mail carrier in the summer. From 1929 to 1932 he attended the University of Wisconsin law school, working his way through school as a waiter, teacher and basketball coach.

Although his employment by a governmental unit actually began in 1927 as a teacher, he became intimately associated with the governing process immediately after receiving his law degree in 1932. From 1933 to 1935 he served as assistant district attorney of Richland County and was city attorney from 1933 to 1937 and again from 1942-44.

In addition he was mayor of Richland Center for more than 3 terms beginning in April 1944, and served 11 years as president of the library board of that city.

It was on June 6, 1936, that he married Helen Davis of Viroqua. They spent their honeymoon in Cleveland, Ohio where Thomson was a delegate to the Republican National Convention. They have 2 daughters and a son.

#### 1934-50 Legislative Leader

Thomson first ran for the assembly in 1934, 2 years after he graduated from law school. He served 3 consecutive terms, 1935 through 1949. During his last 5 campaigns he had no opposition in the general elections except from write-in or independent candidates. At the beginning of his third term in 1939 he was elected speaker of the assembly, a post he held for 3 consecutive terms.

Thereafter, he was Republican floor leader during the 1945, 1947 and 1949 sessions.

Among his legislative proposals of lasting effects are those creating the trust fund for veterans' rehabilitation; the local budget law requiring local governments to prepare and publish a budget; reorganization of the Department of Public Welfare; creation of the Department of Taxation and Board of Tax Appeals and authored an early proposal to reorganize the system of higher education. He sponsored one of the early moves to facilitate reorganization of the local school districts by abolishing those with low valuation. Thomson was an expert parliamentarian and an astute partisan leader.

One of the highlights of Thomson's legislative career was the enactment of the Thomson anti-gambling law in 1945. Although gambling has been prohibited in this state by the Constitution since 1848, in the 1930's and early 1940's gambling was rampant and local enforcement in many areas did not exist. Rigid enforcement of this law quickly curtailed commercial gambling and more than 50,000 slot machines disappeared or were confiscated.

#### As Attorney General

In 1950 the Republican nomination for Attorney General was available because for the first time since 1934 there was no Republican incumbent to consider. In the primary of 1950 Thomson defeated Duesterich for the Republican nomination for Attorney General 224,913 to 149,589 and then went on to win the general election by defeating the Democratic candidate, Henry Reuss, 615,309 to 470,057. In 1952 and 1954 Thomson was unopposed in the primary for renomination to the position and defeated his Democratic opponents in the general election.

As Attorney General, Thomson took an active part in seeking more favorable consideration for Wisconsin users of natural gas, in reducing the interstate barriers to Wisconsin dairy products and in enforcement of the laws prohibiting restraints against trade.

#### As Governor

Governor Thomson was nominated as the Republican candidate for Governor in 1956 without opposition as the most likely candidate to succeed Governor Kohler who had served 3 terms. He then defeated William Proxmire, the 3-time Democratic candidate, 808,273 to 749,421. He entered office with a Republican majority in both houses of the legislature, but with an articulate minority in opposition.

The problems of his administration were largely financial because of the constant increase in the demands for governmental services. He did not betray his pledges to operate the government from traditional sources of revenue. Careful budgeting, elimination of nonessentials, broad use of building corporations to construct

new buildings and rising tax revenues enabled the state to assume a much greater share of the cost of education and leave a surplus in the state treasury of more than \$16,000,000 with no increase in the basic tax rates.

Among the measures enacted into law during the 1957 legislative session was an act to provide group life insurance for state employees, one of the most stringent lobbying laws in the nation, the enactment of a modern motor vehicle code, supervision of welfare funds, the adoption of daylight saving time and the overhauling of the public retirement systems, including the adoption of a system of variable annuities. Welfare and educational institutions fared well in receiving additional funds for operation, salaries and additional buildings.

Governor Thomson adhered closely to the Republican standard throughout his career. Not only was he elected to the several state offices as a Republican, but he was a delegate to 4 national conventions and took a major part in the early proceedings of the 1952 convention in behalf of the candidacy of Robert Taft. Shortly thereafter he was offered a responsible post in the Eisenhower administration by Herbert Brownell, the Attorney General. Early in his career Thomson was the executive secretary of the Young Republican Federation.

A lean man of medium height, Governor Thomson is an immaculate dresser whose graying hair adds dignity to his appearance. He is an excellent speaker with years of training as a debater. He was well-known for the effective use of words on the platform.

The election of November 1958 saw the defeat of Governor Thomson, all the constitutional officers except the Secretary of State, the Republican majority in the assembly and made the balance of power in the senate much closer. Exactly half of the congressional seats were won by each party. At the time few people had been so bold as to predict this outcome although in retrospect many sensed that it was possible if not probable. The farmers' plight, a mild recession and the nationwide trend foresaw some changes.

Governor Thomson retained his residence in Madison and entered the private practice of law. While it seems unlikely that a man who had been active in state politics for a quarter of a century should abruptly abandon all political interests and activities, only the unpredictable future will reveal the path Governor Thomson takes in the fulfillment of his hopes and aspirations.



VERNON W. THOMSON  
GOVERNOR 1957-1959

*Photograph of painting in Executive Suite, State Capitol*

An Editorial from Capital Times, March 1956.

## Vernon Thomson--Key to Big Business' Hopes For 20 Year Rule of State Government

**A**TTY. Gen. Vernon Thomson's announcement that he will run for governor is a surprise to no one. It has been obvious for months that the big business element in this state, who have controlled Wisconsin government for the past 18 years, had settled on him as their choice to extend that control to an even 20 years.

Thomson will get the campaign contributions from the big corporate interests. On his record, he merits them. From the time that he began serving in the Assembly back in the 1930's he has been a devout servant of the special interest in this state who invest in political campaigns to get the kind of government they want.

In those days he was the pivot man in a big business triumvirate that ran the Assembly. The other two members were Reuben Peterson, now a utility lobbyist, and Assembly Speaker Mark Catlin. They were always willing to pick up the ball and carry it for big business.

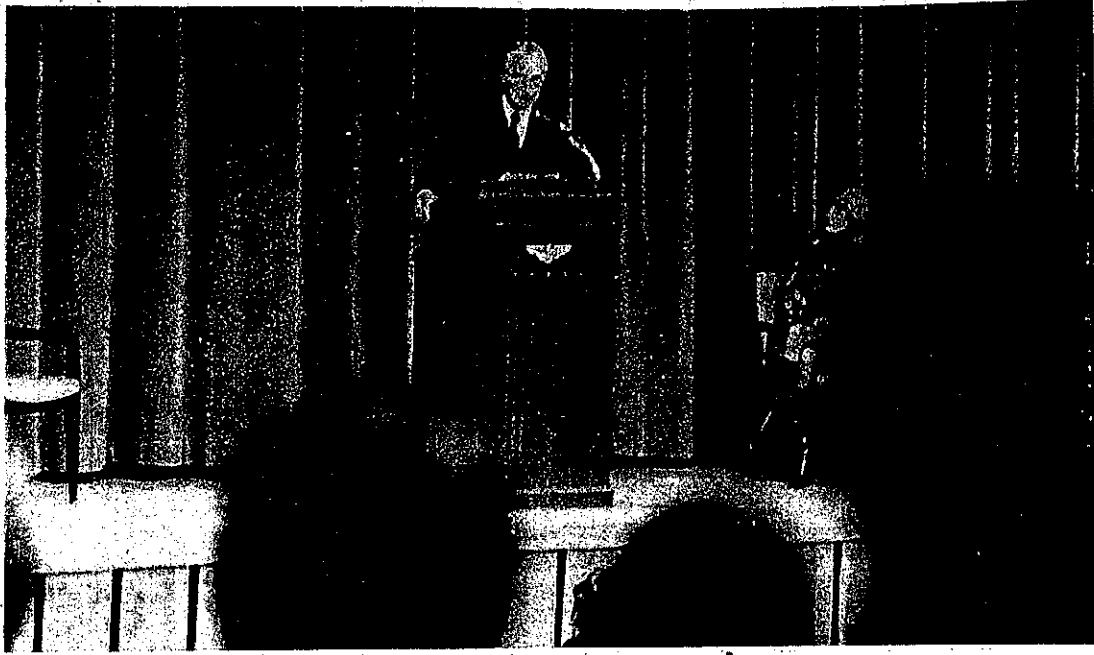
**T**HOMSON has taken a leading part in the passage of anti-labor legislation, in the fight to impose income tax secrecy, to knock out taxation based on ability to pay and just about anything the big GOP contributors asked for. More than any other member of the Legislature he was respon-

sible for a law that handed the railroads \$250,000 yearly from state funds to help them pay the costs of safety devices at railroad crossings.

Even the Wisconsin State Journal blasted the bill as "one of the most brazen and fantastic grabs at the public purse in the long and fantastic history of the railroad grab." Former Gov. Rennebohm vetoed the bill on the grounds that "the cost to the state would reach fantastic amounts." Thomson passed it over the governor's veto.

The railroads have always been in Thomson's corner and they will be again. So will all the other special interests whose cause he served so devotedly in state government.

**T**HE proximity of Thomson's announcement to Gov. Kohler's announcement that he will not run has raised the question of whether a deal has not been made between the two in which Kohler clears the way for Thomson for governor and Thomson will support Kohler in the GOP primary against McCarthy in 1958. Reports of the deal have been so widespread that Thomson saw fit in a press conference last Saturday to make a strong denial. Is he protesting too much?



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With this a presidential election year, the Student Forum committee of the Richland Campus has issued invitations to leading political figures to address Campus meetings. Cong. Vernon W. Thomson was the first speaker in the series last Friday afternoon and discussed many of the current issues facing the American people.

County Room  
Brewer Library

February 17, 1972

LIBRARY

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