

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Victoria County Monument
Other name/site number: NA
Name of related multiple property listing: Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial

2. Location

Street & number: 402 N. DeLeon St., Memorial Square Park
City or town: Victoria State: Texas County: Victoria
Not for publication: [ ] Vicinity: [ ]

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
[ ] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National
Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the
property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
[ ] national [ ] statewide [ ] local

Applicable National Register Criteria: [ ] A [ ] B [ ] C [ ] D

Signature of certifying official / Title: Mark Wolfe, State Historic Preservation Officer
Date: 6/14/18
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
[ ] entered in the National Register
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register
[ ] removed from the National Register
[ ] other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

	Private
<b>X</b>	Public - Local
	Public - State
	Public - Federal

**Category of Property**

	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
<b>X</b>	object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
1	0	objects
1	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions:** RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument

**Current Functions:** RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification:** Other: Monument

**Principal Exterior Materials:** Stone/granite; Metal/bronze

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets 7-6)

Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>A</b>	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>B</b>	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>C</b>	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>D</b>	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations:** F (Commemorative Properties)

**Areas of Significance:** Social History, Art

**Period of Significance:** 1938

**Significant Dates:** 1938

**Significant Person** (only if criterion b is marked): NA

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion d is marked): NA

**Architect/Builder:** Josset, Raoul (sculptor); Page, Jr., Louis C. and Southerland, Louis F. (architects)

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets 8-7 through 8-12)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheet 9-13)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

### Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

**Historic Resources Survey Number** (if assigned): NA

Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property:** less than 1 acre

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 28.801293°N      Longitude: -97.001330°W

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The monument is on the north side of Block "Memorial Park." The nomination encompasses only the monument and the ground upon which it stands, an approximate area of 88 square feet.

**Boundary Justification:** The nomination boundary is drawn to include only the monument itself. No other structures on the property have been evaluated for eligibility due to the specific focus of this theme (*Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*).

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Bonnie Tipton Wilson, THC National Register Historian  
Organization: Texas Historical Commission  
Street & number: P.O. Box 12276  
City or Town: Austin      State: TX      Zip Code: 78711-2276  
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Telephone: 512-463-6046  
Date: March 1, 2018

## Additional Documentation

- Maps**      (see continuation sheets MAP-14)
- Additional items**      (see continuation sheets FIGURE-15 through FIGURE-16)
- Photographs**      (see continuation sheets PHOTO-17 through PHOTO-21)

Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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### Photograph Log

Victoria County Monument  
Victoria, Victoria County, Texas  
Photographer: Gregory Smith  
Date: February 15, 2018

Photo 1: Victoria County Monument—camera facing north

Photo 2: Victoria County Monument oblique—camera facing northeast

Photo 3: Victoria County Monument oblique—camera facing southeast

Photo 4: Center bronze panel showing Josset-designed bas-relief—camera faces north

Photo 5: Left bronze panel—camera faces north. Marker text is produced in individual bronze letters set within horizontal strips of bronze.

Photo 6: Right bronze panel—camera faces north

Photo 7: Memorial Park—camera faces north. The nominated monument is in the background.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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## Description

The *Victoria County* monument is a 22.5-foot-long pink Texas granite memorial with three bronze panels on its front plane in Victoria, Victoria County, Texas. The State of Texas commissioned the monument for the 1936 Centennial, and it commemorates four centuries of Victoria history. Designed by French-born sculptor Raoul Josset and architects Page & Southerland, the monolithic slab features a bronze bas-relief of European explorers Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and Rene Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle with flanking inscriptions produced in open bronze letters set between horizontal bronze strips. Erected in 1938, it retains a high degree of integrity at its original location in Memorial Square Park, and it is in good condition.

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Victoria, the seat of government for Victoria County, is in southeastern Texas on the Coastal Plain near the Gulf of Mexico. Memorial Park occupies one block within the historic limits of the city (once defined by North, South, East, and West Streets), now in present-day southwestern Victoria. The park is immediately bounded by E. Power Ave. (north), N. Wheeler St. (east), E. Commercial St. (south), and N. De Leon St. (west). Little has changed in the blocks surrounding Memorial Park. Residences reflect late-19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural styles; the 1901 Mitchell School retains its historic modifications; a 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouse maintains its integrity alongside the railroad tracks north of the monument; and the block east is still vacant. Originally the city cemetery, Memorial Square Park is now used for historical markers and relics that are sporadically-placed around the park's perimeter. Parallel brick sidewalks extend from the southern park boundary to form a circle in the park center; it once surrounded a windmill.

The Victoria County monument is at the northern edge of Memorial Park, centered on a raised mound of earth and faces south. Its elevated position makes the 7-foot-tall monument appear imposing to visitors. Quarried in Llano by Premiere Granite Quarries, Inc., it is axe-finished pink granite and the foundation is concrete. Its symmetrical composition was designed to be viewed as two monolithic parts: the upper portion forms an isosceles trapezoid that is supported by a long, rectangular base. The binding material within seams connecting the seven granite slabs that form the two monument portions has receded with age, and the overall composition is more apparent. The total length of the base is 22.5-feet and it is approximately 2.5-feet-tall; it is composed of three granite slabs. The two end base blocks (each 4.5-feet-long) project 2 feet out from the upper portion and 7" from plane front and back. The 14.5-foot-long center base slab projects 2" from the portion above. Three large granite blocks are joined to create the upper monument portion on which three bronze panels adhere. Viewed as a unified plane, it is 17-feet-long at the bottom, tapers to 15-feet-long, and is approximately 4.5-feet-tall.

A bas-relief bronze-cast panel is centered on the plane front, and is flanked by two inscriptions panels produced in open bronze letters set between horizontal bronze strips. Sculptor Raoul Josset modeled the sculptural bas-relief, and it features profiles of two European explorers: Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca and Rene Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle. The stylized portraits exhibit Josset's skill in relief composition, and each figure's chiseled facial features and flowing hair convey dimension and movement. A compound branch of leaves, likely pecan and elm, is between the portraits, and each explorer is identified by their name and year they arrived in present-day Texas. Beneath the portraits, the words "VICTORIA" and "COUNTY" surround *empresario* Martin De Leon's cattle brand. The inscription (Figure 3) summarizes Victoria County's territorial and industrial history. Inscriptions in the flanking panels chronicle the county's cultural history.

The Victoria County monument retains exceptional integrity and is in good condition. It retains integrity of materials, design, and workmanship as there have been no changes or damage inflicted to it since its completion in 1938. The workmanship of a Josset is evident in the bas-relief panel. It retains integrity of location at its original dedication site in Memorial Square Park in Victoria. It retains integrity of its setting as the surrounding neighborhood retains its historic character and function. It conveys the feeling of a monument created to commemorate significant historical events and people; and its association with the 1936 Texas Centennial is intact.

Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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## Statement of Significance

The 22.5-foot-long Victoria County monument in Victoria, Victory County, Texas was a major project of the 1936 Texas Centennial. The Advisory Board of Historians initially proposed a small monument at Fort St. Louis in Victoria County. For two years, arguments over property owner rights delayed and altered the original plan and amid the controversy, the Victoria County Centennial Commission leveraged its connections to obtain an imposing memorial befitting their county's history. Sculptor Raoul Josset and architects Page & Southerland designed the Victoria County monument, one of 45 Centennial properties classified as a "monument," to commemorate 400 years of county history. Completed during the height of his career, Josset's bas-relief sculptural interpretation of La Salle and Cabeza de Vaca was based on the Victoria County flag. The property is nominated to the National Register at the state level of significance under the multiple property submission *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*. It is eligible under Criterion A in the area of Social History as a product of the concerted statewide effort to commemorate historic persons and events important to Texas history in the 1930s. The monument was commissioned as part of a major Depression-era public arts project and is significant in the area of Art as an important work by sculptor Raoul Josset. The property meets Criterion Consideration F (Commemorative Properties) because it is significant as a work of art that reflects early 20<sup>th</sup> century interest in recognizing historic subjects throughout Texas, which culminated in the publicly-funded statewide Texas Centennial. The Victoria County monument is located at its original site in Memorial Square Park in Victoria County, and it retains excellent integrity. The period of significance is 1938, the year it was erected.

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## Brief History of Victoria County<sup>1</sup>

Before Mexican and Anglo colonists established Victoria County's first permanent settlements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Native American groups and European explorers traversed the territory. Paleo-Indian artifacts indicate diverse cultures once occupied the area, and by the 16<sup>th</sup> century there were four distinct Native American groups living in the county: Karankawas, Aranamas, Tamiques, and the Tonkawas. In 1528, Spanish *conquistadores* (soldier-explorers) led by Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, part of the ill-fated Narváez Expedition, accidentally landed on modern-day Texas shores on their way from Florida to Spanish settlements near present-day Tampico, Mexico. Cabeza de Vaca's subsequent Texas explorations included visiting Victoria County. Frenchman Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle also missed his intended destination in 1685, when he landed 180 colonists at Matagorda Bay. He then established a settlement, historically called Fort. St. Louis, on Garcitas Creek in present-day Victoria County, but it failed three years later. Spanish explorer Alonso de Leon discovered the ruined settlement and established a *presidio* (fort) and mission on the site of Fort St. Louis in 1721, and it remained in Victoria County until 1749. The Spaniards subsequently introduced cattle and horse-raising to the region.

After the mission and presidio moved to San Antonio (Bexar County), organized settlement in Victoria County ceased until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, there was continuous activity in Victoria County as the La Bahia Road, a critical trade route, connected East Texas to San Antonio through the territory. Individual *ranchos* also existed within Victoria at the time, and Martín De León (1765-1833) was one Mexican citizen to establish a ranch there. He owned several leagues between Chiltpin Creek and the Aransas River. De León raised cattle, mustangs, and goats; by 1824, he amassed 5,000 branded cattle.

The Mexican government approved De León's petition to establish a colony near the vicinity of his ranch in 1823, and he settled 41 Mexican families at a new town called Nuestra Señora Guadalupe de Jesús Victoria (present-day Victoria). Victoria developed as shipping point and stock-raising center along the La Bahía road and the Guadalupe

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<sup>1</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, Craig H. Roell, "Victoria County," accessed April 15, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcv03>.

Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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River. Before the Texas Revolution, the majority population were of Mexican descent. Many of its original settlers fled under Mexican Army occupation, and Anglo citizens later ostracized Mexican Texans that tried to return home. When the Republic of Texas incorporated Victoria in 1839, the city occupants were primarily white.

Throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Victoria flourished as a major junction between Lavaca Bay ports, San Antonio, Austin, and northern Mexico. The county's booming cattle industry shaped transportation improvements, improved the economy, and led to population growth. Rail transportation began in Victoria in 1861 with construction of the San Antonio and Gulf Railroad, and the New York, Texas, and Mexican Railway reached the city in the 1880s. Overland trade routes converged in Victoria, and in 1889 the community built its first highway, a 3-mile-long road that connected at the convergence of the Refugio, Goliad, and Mission Valley roads. Fifty-two city blocks were also paved. By 1900, Victoria was a cosmopolitan city with modern infrastructure and cultural institutions. The *Texan Advocate*, the precursor to *Victoria Advocate*, was published weekly starting in 1846 and began daily printing in 1897. It is the second oldest newspaper in Texas. Between 1850 and 1860, the population more than doubled to 1,986; in 1920, there 18,271 living in Victoria; and by mid-century, the county enumerated 31,241 citizens.

### Memorial Square Park

Memorial Square Park was the City of Victoria's first public cemetery. De León's 1824 Victoria plat map included a 2-block burial ground that was used for public internments until the 1860s. Hundreds of citizens, many whom died from a cholera outbreak, were buried at the cemetery and remains include soldiers of the Texas Revolution, the Mexican War, and the Civil War. During Reconstruction, it was reported that occupying Union soldiers desecrated graves and, families subsequently elected to reinter their family members at another cemetery. It remains the site of more than 200 unmarked burials. Beginning in 1899, the city council made several attempts to construct buildings over the cemetery, but citizens opposed each effort.<sup>2</sup> In 1934, Victoria approved a bond to build a municipal assembly hall in Memorial Park. The Bronte Club, a women's literary group, saved the site from development when they argued:

[Memorial Park] is one of the city's most cherished historical spots, and it is believed that the appropriation the state is soon to make for the observance of the Texas Centennial in 1936 will be partly expended in the beautification of this square and that the erection of a public building on the square may deprive Victoria of such an allotment.<sup>3</sup>

Since 1938, the square has remained a public park that is used to display historical markers and relics.<sup>4</sup>

### The Victoria County Monument

The 22.5-foot-long Victoria County monument in Victoria, Texas was originally planned as an 8-foot-tall granite marker until the local county Centennial commission leveraged its influence to obtain a more "imposing" memorial befitting the history of their community. Texas counties participated in the Centennial by commemorating historically-significant places and people within their respective communities. Projects—such as monuments, markers, museums, and replicas—were a way to drive heritage tourism from the Central Exposition in Dallas across Texas. In addition to the economic incentive for marking historic sites, the state-sanctioned Centennial

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<sup>2</sup> In 1899, the city proposed to build a high school on the site but opposition led to the construction of the Mitchell School on the block adjacent. The cemetery was named Memorial Square at this time.

<sup>3</sup> "Memorial Square Eliminated," *Victoria Advocate*, October 15, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> Relics included a windmill and train car, both of which have been removed. Interpretative signage on east and west borders of the park describe its Memorial Park and the Mitchell School history. Historical markers honor Victoria veterans and the Bronte Club.



Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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properties also legitimized the role a local community played within the larger history of Texas progress and success. Consequently, counties competed to demonstrate to the Advisory Board of Historians local sites of historical significance to receive a proportional cut of the \$750,000 Centennial statewide allocation. Although communities proposed projects, the three-man historical board recommended its own ideas for permanent memorials and markers to the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations. Unlike other counties, Victoria was advantaged by the appointment of one of its own citizens, Joseph V. Vandenberg, to the Commission of Control, and they leveraged his influence to complete a project they wanted.

The Victoria County Centennial commission organized in 1934 to stimulate local interest in the statewide event and plan community celebrations. Leopold Morris (1883-1952) chaired the commission. He held two prominent positions in the city: editor of the *Victoria Advocate*, an important regional periodical published since 1846, and as the Victoria postmaster. In 1935, Morris designed the Victoria County flag that included the likenesses of European explorers Cabeza de Vaca and La Salle that surrounded *empresario* De León's cattle brand (Figure 2). The same year, he also presented Victoria County's application for memorials to the Advisory Board of Historians at its July 2 hearing in Austin; the entirety of which was published in the *Victoria Advocate*.

Supported by the Victoria delegation, Morris' presentation first outlined the county's four-century-long history.<sup>5</sup> Texas civilization, he argued, began in Victoria County with prehistoric and historic-era Native Americans. Seventeenth-century European exploration of Texas began in the county's original boundary and led to the establishment of La Salle's Fort St. Louis, the state's first Anglo-Saxon settlement in 1685. He communicated that Victoria was the site of notable events in each subsequent epoch of Texas history and evidenced Spanish missions, De León's colonial settlement under Mexico's rule, and Victoria's role in the Texas Revolution. Morris called out historically-significant individuals, institutions, and organizations that shaped the county's economic, political, and cultural life. Noting the Commission of Control's desire to memorialize the principle industries of Texas, Morris also asserted Victoria's position as one of Texas' oldest and leading cattle centers.<sup>6</sup>

Morris requested the Advisory Board of Historians recommend \$40,000 for permanent commemorative monuments in Victoria County. He enumerated \$5,000 for small historical markers, \$25,000 for a monument to the Victoria cattle industry, and a \$15,000 allotment to construct a miniature replica of Fort St. Louis. In describing the last request, Morris acknowledged interest in marking the actual for site but expressed doubt that its landowners would sell the historic portion of their property nor allow a monument placed there. Morris re-emphasized Victoria County's wish for a \$25,000 central monument for the county seat's public square as a modest request "considering Victoria's glorious past."<sup>7</sup>

Instead, the advisory board's October report to the Commission of Control recommended "Centennial crumbs" for Victoria: a \$1,000 granite and bronze monument inscribed with a "brief" history of the county.<sup>8</sup> The Morris-described "picayunish sum" embittered the Victoria Centennial committee, and Morris contacted Vandenberg to influence better Centennial recognition for the county. Upon conferring with the Commission of Control, the historians' initial recommendation was supplemented with \$1250 for historical markers, and another \$1,000 for a granite slab monument at the site of La Salle's Fort St. Louis.<sup>9,10</sup> Despite Morris' previous proprietary warning

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<sup>5</sup> Victoria Centennial Commission members that accompanied Morris were: Ben T. Jordan, Jasper F. Welder, Joseph M. Pickering, Kate O'Connor, Dora Van Zandt. These individuals were business owners or ranchers in Victoria County.

<sup>6</sup> "Victoria County's Historical Claims for Allotments of Texas Centennial Funds," *Victoria Advocate*, July 3, 1935.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> "Centennial Crumbs Recommended for DeWitt and Victoria Counties," *Victoria Advocate*, October 7, 1935.

<sup>9</sup> The 1935 Report of the Advisory Board of Historians erroneously recommended the Fort St. Louis monument for Calhoun County. The correction was recorded in Commission of Control minutes on October 31, 1935. Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, Advisory Board of Texas Historians, "Reports of the Advisory Board of Texas Historians to the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial

Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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about the fort site, chairman Louis Kemp argued for the Fort St. Louis monument, saying it was “a world-wide historic spot and regardless of how far removed from society and regardless of its inaccessibility, in time a State Park will be built there and a State Highway...will lead to it.”<sup>11</sup>

For all of 1936, Kemp and the Keeran Family, owners of the Fort St. Louis site, agreed to and subsequently rejected various deals in which the state would take title, or lease, acres directly surrounding the old settlement.<sup>12</sup> The *Victoria Advocate* captured all the failed attempts of state and local Centennial authorities to resolve the matter, including a period of heated finger-pointing questioning each party’s patriotism. Amid the controversy, Morris continued to press for a central monument to commemorate Victoria County’s past, and Vanderberge finally provided the opportunity. In June 1936, Vanderberge sent a telegram to the local commission advising them to propose a new monument because additional funding became available in the budget for statewide Centennial projects.<sup>13</sup> He then presented their proposal for a “central monument to be erected on Memorial Square,” to the Commission of Control who approved \$3,800 for the project.<sup>14</sup>

The State Board of Control originally commissioned Austin-based architects Page & Southerland and sculptor Raoul Josset in February 1936 to design Victoria County’s \$1,000 marker. When it was cancelled, they retained both parties to complete the \$3,800 monument. Josset based his bas-relief design that depicted Cabeza de Vaca and La Salle on Morris’ county flag, and the local Centennial commission wrote the marker text. After the Centennial Division confirmed the monument site, workers erected the completed memorial on September 4, 1938.<sup>15</sup> Although the community invested three years into securing Centennial monuments for the county, the Victoria County monument was not dedicated.<sup>16</sup>

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Celebrations,” Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, 22; Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, Minutes, October 31, 1935, Pat M. Neff Collection, Interim Years 1920-1947, The Texas Collection, Baylor University; “Money to be Reserved for County Parks,” *Victoria Advocate*, November 1, 1935.

<sup>10</sup> The State Board of Control commissioned Austin-based architecture firm Page & Southerland and sculptor Raoul Josset to design the \$1,000 Fort St. Louis/La Bahía, and others within the same scheme. Despite the ongoing controversy, they produced the monument blueprint on June 13, 1936. Having not been paid for the work by February 1937, Page & Southerland submitted a bill to the Board of Control for the cancelled monument design. Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, Minutes, February 12, 1937, Dobie Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>11</sup> Advisory Board of Historians, Louis W. Kemp to Foik and Dobie, November 14, 1936, Dobie Papers.

<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed account of the controversy, see the National Register of Historic Places nomination for *La Salle Monument*, Indianola, Calhoun County, Texas, National Register 2018. The Keeran Family recognized the historical and archaeological value of the Fort St. Louis/La Bahía site, and they supported placing a monument there. However, they objected to the construction of a highway through their pasture for fear of relic-hunters and cattle thieves. According to the paper, unidentified “loyal, public-spirited and patriotic” citizens influenced the landowner, but it is not clear in what way. The *Houston Post* published incendiary articles that stiffened the Keerans’ opposition to a monument. It painted the controversy as a battle of interests between wealthy cattlemen versus patriotic pilgrims, and supported the state’s eminent domain rights. Ultimately, the Commission of Control allocated funds to erect a large monument to La Salle on the shores of Indianola, where he first landed in Texas.

<sup>13</sup> It was common for the Commission of Control to cancel projects and reallocate funds for other Centennial monuments/markers during the effort to complete statewide Centennial commemorative properties. Please refer to *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial MPS*, Statewide, Texas, National Register 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Federal Centennial funds supported \$1,000 of the total \$3,8000 for the Victoria County monument. “Monument for Memorial Square,” *Victoria Advocate*, June 5, 1936.

<sup>15</sup> “Centennial Memorial is Being Erected in City,” *Victoria Advocate*, August 30, 1938; “Memorial to City, County Completed Here on Sunday,” *Victoria Advocate*, September 4, 1938.

<sup>16</sup> The *Victoria Advocate* and its editor Leopold Morris enthusiastically reported on Centennial activity from 1936 to 1938. Morris even indicated that a dedicatory ceremony for the nominated monument would be held at a “later date,” but no such event was publicized in the newspaper.

Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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### **Raoul Jean Josset (1899-1957)<sup>17</sup>**

“Frenchman by birth, American by law, and Texan by preference,” Raoul Josset, the most prolific sculptor of Texas Centennial monuments, was born in Fours, Nièvre, France on December 9, 1899.<sup>18</sup> Educated at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and winner of the prestigious Prix de Rome, Josset also apprenticed under French sculptor Émile-Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929). He immigrated to Chicago in 1927 and remained in the United States for the rest of his life. Josset’s career gained momentum in the early 1930s, and his aesthetic, influenced by French Art Deco and classical sculpture, was popular to American architects. His early commissions in Chicago included architectural decorations on the Palmolive building (1929), the Carbon & Carbide building (1929), and at the Century of Progress International Exposition (1933).

During this period, he was introduced to architect Donald Nelson and the two collaborated on projects for Chicago’s Century of Progress fair. On Nelson’s recommendation, architect George Dahl invited Josset to Texas in 1935 to create commemorative statues for the Central Centennial Exposition at Fair Park in Dallas. The Texas Centennial was the most intensely-creative period of Josset’s career. Upon completion of his commissions at Fair Park in 1936, the State Board of Control hired Josset to design monuments and statues for the statewide Centennial. In three years, he completed 35 monuments and 5 statues, all commemorating subjects in Texas history.

Josset’s commissions slowed after the Centennial, and he briefly pursued work outside of Texas. He returned to Dallas permanently in 1948 to share a studio with a friend, Jose Martin. There he created his final works that included: a 75-foot-long stone bas-relief for the Nelson-designed Grand Lodge Masonic Temple in Waco (1949), statue of *St. Francis of Assisi* in Lubbock (1953), and a statue of *Sam Houston* for the Masonic Temple in Waco (1957). Just as he was enjoying renewed professional success, Josset died suddenly in 1957. He told friends that he felt Texans appreciated his talents, saying “Texans seek [art] with meaning and...they choose with an eye of permanence, thinking in terms of years, generations, maybe forever.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Page & Southerland<sup>20</sup>**

Louis C. Page, Jr. (1909-1981) and Louis F. Southerland (1906-1994) met at the University of Texas School of Architecture in 1930 and were roommates at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1933, Page & Southerland established their firm in Tyler, Texas with hopes that the nationwide depression would not affect the prosperous oil town. Unfortunately, as Southerland recalled, “the money was there but they weren’t spending it on buildings.”<sup>21</sup> The partners closed the business and, temporarily, went their separate ways.

In 1935, they reopened in Austin and began looking for commissions. Page & Southerland responded to the Board of Control’s 1936 bid to design schemes for Centennial markers and monuments. Although it was not a prestigious account for the young firm, the contract for 622 historical markers and 26 monuments paid well. Between February and November 1936, the young firm produced schemes for historical markers, grave markers, and designs for 7 unique monuments that the State Board of Control used to construct these Centennial property types. The Victoria County monument was among the group of unique memorials they created. Others included: Gonzales Memorial Museum Monument (Gonzales, Gonzales Co.), Mier Expedition & Dawson’s Men Monument (La Grange, Fayette Co.), New Braunfels Monument (New Braunfels, Comal Co.), Fort Griffin Monument (Albany, Shackelford Co.),

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<sup>17</sup> Section adapted from *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*, 24-25.

<sup>18</sup> “Raoul Josset Completes His 8-Foot Childress Memorial,” *Dallas Morning News*, April 3, 1938.

<sup>19</sup> “Texas Mourns Tragic Loss of Raoul Josset, Sculptor,” *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, July 21, 1957.

<sup>20</sup> Section adapted from *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*, 23.

<sup>21</sup> “Louis Southerland Still Holding Fast to Drawing Pen That Paints Success,” *The Austin Statesman*, December 29, 1947.

Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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and the Juan de Padilla Monument (Amarillo, Potter Co.). Page & Southerland's Centennial commission, a job outside their typical area of architectural interest, imparted a lasting contribution to the Texas cultural landscape.

There are few documents that record Page & Southerland's Centennial work, but other records show that 1936 marked the beginning of their productive careers.<sup>22</sup> In addition to many residential projects, they received two big commissions before 1940: the City of Austin Municipal Building (1937) and the Public Works Administration-funded Rosewood Courts public housing project (1938) in East Austin. Louis Page's brother George joined the firm in 1939 and, after WWII, Page Southerland Page moved to large commercial, medical, and public building projects as they continued their practice designing residential buildings. Their success in the 1950's and 1960's allowed Page Southerland Page to open additional offices in Houston (1973) and Dallas (1975). Today, the firm operates as Page and designs projects worldwide.

### Conclusion

The 1938 *Victoria County* monument in Victoria, Victoria County, Texas was a major project of the 1936 Texas Centennial. Initially conceived as a \$1,000 granite slab marker, the Victoria County Centennial Commission leveraged its connections to obtain an imposing memorial befitting their county's illustrious history. Based on the Victoria County flag design, sculptor Raoul Josset and Austin architectural firm Page & Southerland created the monument that artfully commemorates 400 years of county history. It is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Social History and Criterion C in the area of Art at the state level of significance under the multiple property submission *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*. The Victoria County monument is an excellent example of the statewide public art program and the unique monuments designed by master sculptors and architects. It is significant in the area of Art as an important work by master sculptor Raoul Josset. The property also meets Criterion Consideration F (Commemorative Properties) because it is significant as a work of art that reflects early 20th century interest in recognizing historic subjects throughout Texas, which culminated in the publicly-funded statewide Texas Centennial. The period of significance is 1938, the year the monument was erected.

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<sup>22</sup> Architectural drawings by Page & Southerland and Page Southerland Page are housed at the Alexander Architectural Archive at the University of Texas and the Austin History Center. The Texas State Library & Archives Austin has drafts of selected Centennial monuments (not Victoria County) and marker schemes drawn by Page & Southerland in February – June 1936. The only business records pertaining to their Centennial work is in the Texas State Board of Control, Centennial Division minutes and Tom C. King's audit report for the Centennial (see bibliography).

Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

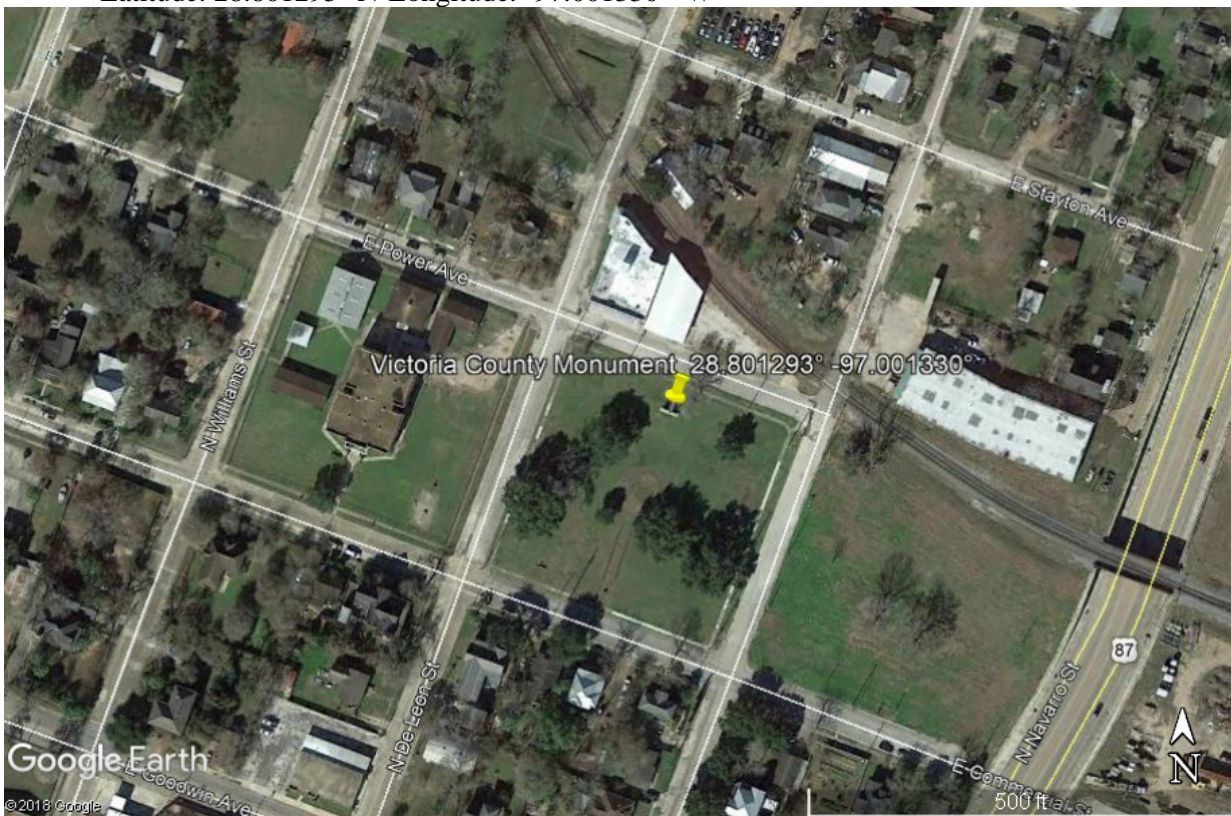
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**Maps**

Map 1: Victoria County, Texas



Map 2: Google Earth, accessed March 1, 2018  
Latitude: 28.801293° N Longitude: -97.001330° W



Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

Figure 1: 1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Victoria, Texas. Memorial Square Park is shaded blue and the approximate location of the nominated monument is indicated by the star.  
Source: Perry-Castaneda Library, University of Texas at Austin.

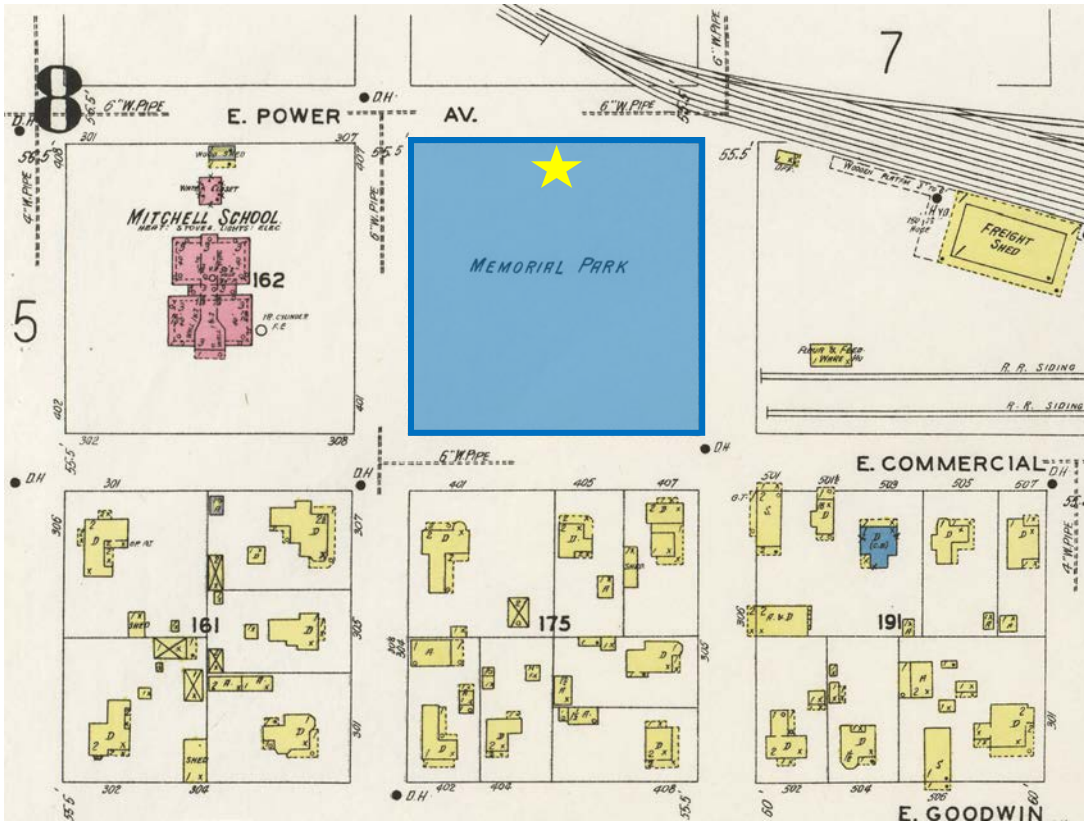
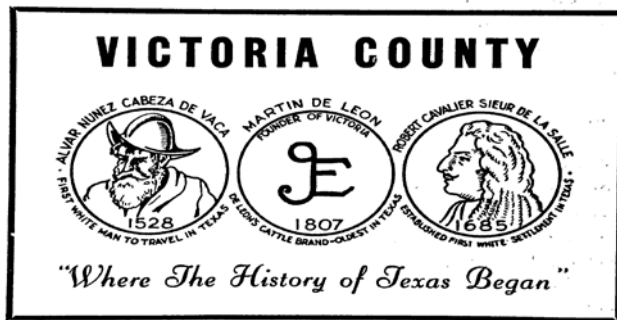


Figure 2: Leopold Morris created the following illustration for the Victoria County flag. At the request of the Victoria County Centennial Commission, Raoul Josset based the bas-relief design on the flag.  
Source: Celebration Program, "Texas Centennial Celebration and Commemoration of the 112<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of Victoria." Centennial Celebration, 1936. Victoria County. Subject Files. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin.



Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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Figure 3: Victoria County monument inscription

Source: Schoen, Harold. *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence*. Austin: Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, 1938, 100.

(Center Panel)

1528 CABEZA DE VACA

1685 CAVALIER DE LA SALLE

VICTORIA COUNTY  
UNDER THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT VICTORIA WAS A  
DISTRICT IN 1832, A MUNICIPALITY IN 1835. UNDER THE  
REPUBLIC OF TEXAS VICTORIA COUNTY WAS CREATED  
MARCH 17, 1836 WITH VICTORIA AS THE COUNTY SEAT.  
ITS TERRITORY HAS SINCE BEEN MATERIALLY REDUCED  
THROUGH THE CREATION OF OTHER COUNTIES.  
THE PRINCIPAL INDUSTRY OF THE PEOPLE OF THE REGION  
DURING THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY WAS CATTLE RAISING. HERE  
THAT INDUSTRY HAD ITS ORIGIN IN TEXAS, AND VICTORIA  
COUNTY CONTINUES TO THE PRESENT DAY TO BE  
THE LEADING CATTLE COUNTY OF THE STATE.  
1836 1936  
ERECTED JOINTLY BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE  
UNITED STATES AND THE STATE OF TEXAS  
1936

(Left Panel)

VICTORIA COUNTY EARLY HOME OF THE  
KARANKAWA INDIANS. REGION ROAMED BY  
ALVAR NUNEZ CABEZA DE VACA IN 1534 1535  
THE FIRST WHITE MAN AND COMPANIONS  
TO TRAVEL FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE  
PACIFIC OCEAN. SITE OF THE FIRST FRENCH  
SETTLEMENT IN TEXAS ATTEMPTED BY  
RENE ROBERT CAVALIER SIEUR DE LA  
SALLE AND COMPANIONS WHO BUILT FORT  
ST. LOUIS ON GARCITAS CREEK IN 1685.  
DEVASTATED BY THE KARANKAWA INDIANS  
BURNED BY MEMBERS OF THE ALONSO  
DE LEON EXPEDITION IN 1689. ON ITS  
REMAINS THE SPANIARDS CONSTRUCTED  
PRESIDIO DE NUESTRA SENORA DE LORETO  
DE LA BAHIA DEL ESPIRITU SANTO.

(Right Panel)

AS A PROTECTION FOR THE MISSION DE  
NUESTRA SENORA DEL ESPIRITU SANTO DE  
ZUNIGA BOTH ESTABLISHED BY JOSEPH DE  
AZLOR, MARQUIS DE AGUAYO AND FATHER FRAY  
AGUSTIN PATRON, O.F.M. IN 1722. BOTH MOVED  
TO MISSION VALLEY ON THE GUADALUPE  
RIVER IN 1726. MOVED FINALLY TO  
SANTA DOROTEA NOW GOLIAD NEAR THE SAN  
ANTONIO RIVER IN 1749. THE AREA EMBRACED  
BY THIS COUNTY SETTLED BY THE COLONY  
OF MARTIN DE LEON, EMPRESARIO IN 1824  
THIS REGION WAS SETTLED BY MARTIN DE  
LEON, EMPRESARIO, IN 1824 WHO NAMED THE  
SEAT OF HIS COLONY GUADALUPE VICTORIA  
IN HONOR OF THE PRESIDENT OF MEXICO  
HERO OF ITS STRUGGLE FOR INDENPENCE.



Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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**Photographs**

Photo 1: Victoria County Monument—camera facing north, February 15, 2018.



Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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Photo 2: Victoria County Monument oblique—camera facing northeast, February 15, 2018



Photo 3: Victoria County Monument oblique—camera facing southeast, February 15, 2018.



Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

Photo 4: Center bronze panel showing Josset-designed bas-relief—camera faces north, February 15, 2018



Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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Photo 5: Left bronze panel. Marker text is produced in individual bronze letters set within horizontal strips of bronze. Camera faces north, February 15, 2018.



Photo 6: Right bronze panel, camera faces north—February 15, 2018.



Victoria County Monument, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

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Photo 7: Memorial Square Park—camera faces north, February 15, 2018. The nominated monument is in the background. A small local marker, one of 6 on the property, and brick-paved sidewalks are in the foreground.



*~end~*