

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

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Amon B. King's Men Monument
Other name/site number: NA
Name of related multiple property listing: Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial

2. Location

Street & number: 807 Commerce St., King's Memorial Park
City or town: Refugio State: Texas County: Refugio
Not for publication: Vicinity: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

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer 6/14/18
Signature of certifying official / Title Date
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

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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 through 7-7)

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C	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"/>	D	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: 1937

Significant Dates: 1937

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

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

Architect/Builder: Josset, Raoul (sculptor); Nelson, Donald S. (architect)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-8 through 8-16)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 9-17)

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

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: less than 1 acre

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 28.296476° N Longitude: -97.274890° W

Verbal Boundary Description: The monument is in the center of City Block 44, called King's Memorial Park. The nomination encompasses only the monument and the ground upon which it stands.

Boundary Justification: The nomination boundary is drawn to include only the monument itself, as the surrounding star-shaped paving has been modified. 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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Date: March 1, 2018

Additional Documentation

- Maps** (see continuation sheets MAP-18)
- Additional items** (see continuation sheets FIGURE-19 through FIGURE-25)
- Photographs** (see continuation sheets PHOTO-26 through PHOTO-32)

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Photograph Log

Amon B. King's Men Monument
Refugio, Refugio County, Texas
Photographer: Gregory Smith
Date: February 15, 2018

Photo 1: King's Men monument in King's Memorial Park, Refugio—camera faces east

Photo 2: King's Men monument (front elevation)—camera faces east

Photo 3: King's Men monument (south elevation)—camera faces north

Photo 4: King's Men monument (northeast elevation)—camera faces southwest

Photo 5: Bronze inscription ("Panel 5") on granite pylon base—camera faces west

Photo 6: Bronze-cast state seal on granite pylon base—camera faces north

Photo 7: Detail of King's Men statuery figure—camera faces east

Photo 8: King's Men statuery figure (front elevation)—camera faces east

Photo 9: King's Men statuery figure (south elevation)—camera faces north

Photo 10: King's Men statuery figure (south elevation)—camera faces north

Photo 11: King's Men statuery figure (north elevation)—camera faces south

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.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Description

The Amon B. King's Men Monument is a 7.5-foot-tall bronze-cast statuary figure atop a 20.6-foot-tall octagonal shaft of granite in Refugio, Refugio County, Texas. Commissioned by the State of Texas for the 1936 Centennial, the semi-nude figure of a kneeling man, holding in one hand a broken sword and the other placed on a laurel leaf, was designed by sculptor Raoul Josset to symbolize the execution of Captain Amon B. King's Texas Army auxiliary forces after the Battle of Refugio during the 1836 Texas Revolution. Completed in 1937, the monument is in the center of King's Memorial Park, a public square, across from the county courthouse in Refugio. It retains a high degree of integrity and is in good condition.

Refugio, the seat of government for Refugio County, is 35 miles north of Corpus Christi on the lower Gulf Coast of Texas. King's Memorial Park occupies an entire city block across from the 1917 Refugio County courthouse. The park is approximately five miles north of Refugio's southern city limit, defined by the north bank of the Mission River. It is immediately bounded by East Purisima St. (north), Osage St. (east), East Empresario St. (south), and Commerce St. (west). The block was originally called *Plaza de le Constitución*, but the community later renamed it King's Memorial Park in honor of Amon B. King and the 1886 monument erected there in his name.¹

The *Amon B. King's Men* (hereafter "King's Men") monument is in the center of King's Memorial Park. The base sits on a reconstructed red brick inlay star within a black brick inlay circle; the diameter of which is approximately 68-feet. Its design is based on the original inlay feature that pre-dated the 1937 King's Men monument (Figure 2). A sidewalk immediately surrounds the perimeter of the circle and four sidewalks extend from the center to the northwest, northeast, and southeast corners of the block. Originally, a fourth sidewalk extended from the southwest corner before the construction of the public library in 1961. These features were constructed sometime after the city donated the park to the state in 1915. Two parallel sidewalks run from the west side of the block, across from the courthouse, to the monument center and were constructed in 1939. A gazebo/bandstand, small historical markers, and benches also decorate the park. The perimeter of King's Memorial Park is landscaped with evenly-spaced crepe myrtles; mature oak and ash trees grow near the center of the square. The Dennis M. O'Connor Public Library (1961) occupies approximately 6,660 square feet of the block's southwest corner.

Classified as a "monument" by the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, *King's Men* consists of a 20.6'-tall octagonal shaft of polished red granite that supports a 7.5'-tall bronze figure. Completed by sculptor Raoul Josset, the statuary is a symbolic memorial to Captain Amon B. King and his auxiliary force who were captured and executed after the 1836 Battle of Refugio. A male figure, nude except for draped fabric, kneels at the top of the granite shaft. He holds a broken sword, symbolizing defeat, in his upraised right hand; the other hand is placed on a laurel leaf, representing honor.

The granite octagonal shaft, designed by architect Donald S. Nelson, is supported by a smaller base of polished granite that rests upon a larger base of concrete aggregate twenty feet in diameter. Eight bronze-cast panels form a band around the shaft at the height of five feet above the base. Marker text on six panels narrates the three-day battle, the Texans' subsequent capture and execution on March 16, 1836, and lists the names of men killed (Figure 6). Two panels show the Seal of Texas, an olive and live oak wreath encircling a five-pointed star.

¹ Sources differ as to when the plaza was renamed. Some believed the name changed after the placement of a monument to King's Men was placed in 1886 and others state the name changed when the city donated the property to the State of Texas for a historical park in 1915.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Integrity

The King's Men monument retains exceptional integrity and is in very good condition. It retains integrity of materials, design, and workmanship as there have been no changes or damage inflicted to the monument since its construction in 1937. It retains integrity of location at its original site in King's Memorial Park in Refugio, Refugio County. It retains integrity of its setting on the public square, surrounded by the county courthouse and historic homes. The statue conveys the feeling of a commemorative monument created to memorialize Texans executed after the 1836 Battle of Refugio, and its association with the 1936 Texas Centennial is intact.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Statement of Significance

The *Amon B. King's Men* monument in Refugio, a major commemorative project of the 1936 Texas Centennial, is one of the most artistically-distinct products of the statewide celebration of Texas history. Sculptor Raoul Josset and architect Donald S. Nelson designed the memorial, one of 45 Centennial properties classified as a "monument," in honor of Texans executed after the 1836 Battle of Refugio. Completed during the height of his career, Josset's interpretation of the event is realized in the full-rounded bronze sculpture of a nameless Texas soldier. Influenced by Greek and Roman classical sculpture, the semi-nude figure is one of four allegorical statues produced for the Centennial. Its placement atop a 20.6-foot octagonal pylon, the tallest base constructed for a Centennial statuary, elevated the symbolism Josset intended to convey. Upon completion in 1937, the community rejected Josset's allegorical monument. Locals called it a "monstrosity" that did not represent Texas history and refused to dedicate it. In 2011, on the 175th anniversary of the Battle of Refugio, the Refugio County Historical Commission officially dedicated the King's Men monument.

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 under Criterion C 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 20th century interest in recognizing historic subjects throughout Texas, which culminated in the publicly-funded statewide Texas Centennial. The King's Men monument is located at its original site in King's Memorial Park in Refugio and it retains excellent integrity. The period of significance is 1937, the year it was erected.

Refugio, Texas²

The Copanes, a Karankawan tribe, organized a permanent village at present-day Refugio in the 18th century. In 1793, Spanish Franciscans moved the Nuestra Señora del Refugio Mission to the village site in effort to convert the Copanes to Catholicism and teach them aspects of Hispanic culture. It was part of the larger Spanish mission system, which began in 1682, and Mission Refugio was the last of these institutions founded in Texas. Settlement around the mission grew by 1830, the same year it was secularized, and numerous Mexican *ranchos* and a village surrounded the Spanish-era compound.

The Mexican government approved James Power and James Hewetson for *empresario* contracts to settle territory that included Nuestra Señora del Refugio Mission and its village between 1828 and 1832. In 1834, Irish immigrants and Mexican colonists received titles and lots within the village they called Refugio. Refugio was comprised of 49 original town blocks with *Plaza de le Constitución*, a public square, at the exact center. Under the Mexican government, Refugio was the seat of government for the Refugio Municipality. On March 14, 1836, during the Battle of Refugio of the Texas Revolution, residents fled and the town was almost destroyed by the Mexican Army. The Republic of Texas organized Refugio as one of the thirteen original counties in 1836. Although the town of Refugio was designated the county seat, it was sparsely populated until the 1870s.

Refugians experienced several economic booms during the last decades of the 19th century and first decades of the 20th century. The local economy was first revived by saloons and gambling houses in the late 1860s. Refugio also grew as a market and shipping center during that period. By 1890, the town had a wooden courthouse, several churches, a

² This section derived from *Handbook of Texas Online*, John Leffler, "Refugio, TX," accessed February 19, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hgr03>.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

convent, two public schools, a hotel, and had grown to a population of 1,100. The St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railway laid its tracks through Refugio in 1905 and its presence attracted more merchant businesses. Rapid development occurred after 1928 with the discovery of oil in Refugio County. Within a five-year period, Refugio's population jumped from 933 (1925) to 2,019 (1930), and doubled to 4,077 in 1941. Paved streets, modern public buildings, water and sewage systems, and residential subdivisions were evidence of its prosperity and development. Since 1960, however, Refugio's population has declined to 2,900 (2000), but it remains an important local center for petroleum and petrochemical industries.

Brief History of the Battle of Refugio and Captain Amon B. King's Auxiliary Force³

The Battle of Refugio was a series of fights between Texan and Mexican forces that occurred March 12-15, 1836 during the Texas Revolution. In October 1835, Amon Butler King (1807-1836), a native of Baltimore, organized the Paducah (Kentucky) Volunteers to join the Texas Revolution. Captain King's company arrived in Nacogdoches, Texas with Captain Peyton S. Wyatt's Huntsville (Alabama) Company on December 8, 1835. Under General Sam Houston's orders, King's company garrisoned in the Nuestra Señora del Refugio Mission until ordered to Goliad where they were mustered as "auxiliary volunteers," under Colonel James W. Fannin, Jr. While King was away, loyalist Mexican *rancheros* who served as independent scouts and advance cavalry units for Mexican General José de Urrea, raided Refugio leaving remaining Anglo families stranded. On March 10, King and 28 men to Refugio on Fannin's orders to escort civilians and supplies back to Goliad.

Before leaving Refugio on March 12, King's forces were ambushed outside the town by *rancheros* under Captain Carlos de la Garza. King's men and the families were forced to retreat to the mission. The siege was broken the following day by Lieutenant Colonial William Ward's Georgia Battalion and Wyatt's Huntsville Company, both sent by Fannin to relieve King. On March 14, King disobeyed orders to return to Goliad to instead punish Garza's *rancheros*. Splitting the Texan forces, King's company marched south to the Mission River, and Ward's men stayed at Mission Refugio. After ambushing a small group of Mexicans, King found he was blocked from returning to the mission by Urrea's army. King's company defended itself against the Mexican Army and attempted to escape under cover of nightfall. On March 15, however, they were captured and marched to the mission as prisoners. Ward's Company escaped but ultimately surrendered to Urrea at Dimitt's Landing. Pursuant to the Mexican government's no quarter policy during the Texas Revolution, Captain King and 15 men were executed one mile north of Mission Refugio. Twelve-year-old John Hynes and other Refugians later collected their remains and buried the Texans at Mt. Cavalry Catholic Cemetery in town.

Early Commemoration Efforts

In 1884, Texas lawmakers anticipated the 50th anniversary of the Texas Revolution (1886) by enacting legislation to provide annual pensions for veterans of the conflict, acquire portions of critical battle sites, and appropriate funds for memorials at gravesites of fallen veterans.⁴ It included a \$1,000 allocation to erect a monument in memory of Captain Amon B. King and his men at the Refugio burial site and designated a local committee to oversee its production and placement. When the committee could not find the burial in Mt. Cavalry Cemetery, citizens decided to place the

³ This section derived from *Handbook of Texas Online*, Craig H. Roell, "Refugio, Battle of," accessed February 19, 2018, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qr01>; and *Handbook of Texas Online*, and Hobart Huson and Craig H. Roell, "King, Amon Butler" accessed February 19, 2018, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fki15>.

⁴ The 18th Texas State Legislature appropriated \$20,000 to acquire the Alamo chapel; \$1,500 for a 10-acre cemetery at the San Jacinto battlegrounds; a \$1,500 monument at Goliad to Fannin's Men, a \$1,000 monument at Refugio to King's Men; and a \$1,000 monument at LaGrange to Dawson's Men. *Laws of Texas: 1822-1897*, Vol. 9, (Austin: the Gammel Book Company, 1898) 129.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

monument in the center of *Plaza de la Constitucion*.⁵ Victoria monument maker Gustav Stolz produced the marble obelisk that was inscribed with the names of King and his men. Its dedication on March 16, 1886 was a “gala event,” attended by surviving veterans.⁶ Thereafter, the plaza was designated “King’s Memorial Park,” but the city leased the public grounds surrounding the monument for pasture.⁷

In 1899, local clubwomen pledged to end the city government’s policy of leasing the block for pasture and rid the parcel of the “luxuriant growth of weeds,” to improve King’s Park for Refugio.⁸ Within three years, they organized a park association to oversee the installation of concrete walks (said to have been made, in part, by stones from the nearby Mission Nuestra Señora), ornamental shade trees and shrubs, rustic seats, and a fence around the perimeter.⁹

For the 75th anniversary of the Texas Revolution, the state acquired land associated with the event to be preserved as state historical parks. Some communities, like Refugio, donated property. In 1915, the Legislature accepted the city’s proffered public square and named it the King’s Memorial State Park.¹⁰ The Texas State Board of Control, then in charge of managing many historical parks, oversaw the maintenance and improvement of King’s Park with the help of an appointed board of local citizens. It is believed the Board of Control constructed the original brick inlay star in the center of the plaza during this time.

On May 9, 1934, workers accidentally uncovered the shared grave of King’s Men at Mt. Cavalry Cemetery, and they reported the discovery to Father William Oberste, the parish priest. The Texas Landmarks Society helped raise funds to excavate the burial of sixteen remains that was conducted by J. Frank Low, a local archaeologist, and under the direction of Oberste. They found military artifacts—buckle and buttons—and bullets embedded in some bones. Remains of Mexican Army soldiers turned up in June when the Texas Highway Department began its construction of State Highway 128 (now U.S. Hwy. 77) in front of the Our Lady of Refuge Church, the former site of Nuestra Señora del Refugio Mission. In June 1934, the Texans were reinterred at the same grave in Mt. Cavalry Cemetery in an elaborate funeral service.¹¹

The Amon B. King’s Men Monument

Raoul Josset designed the Amon B. King’s Men monument in Refugio, a major project of the 1936 Texas Centennial, as a Greek-inspired allegorical memorial to the fallen Texans, but Refugians ultimately rejected the monument because

⁵ The committee consisted of three county officials: Judge Lieuen M. Rogers, clerk George Howard, and treasurer Hugh Rea. They enlisted Judge John Hynes to lead the committee to where he originally found the bones of King and other Texans in 1836 and to Mt. Cavalry Cemetery where the remains were subsequently buried. In 1885, Hynes was “an elderly man and so many years had elapsed,” that he was unable to locate the exact burial spot. “King Massacre Observed Here,” *Refugio Timely Remarks*, March 19, 1937.

⁶ Hobart Huson, *Refugio: A Comprehensive History of Refugio County from Aboriginal Times to 1955*, (Woodsboro, TX: Rooke Foundation, 1955): 253-254.

⁷ Sources conflict as to when the plaza was renamed. Some believed the name changed after the placement of a monument to King’s Men was placed in 1886 and others state the name changed when the city donated the property to the State of Texas for a historical park in 1915.

⁸ “Let Us Have a Park,” *Refugio Review*, November 24, 1899.

⁹ *Refugio Review*, February 1, 1901.

¹⁰ The same year Refugio donated its public square (1915) the state appropriated \$10,000 for the purchase of 50-acres at Washington-on-the-Brazos. Budgetary reasons caused the State to return some historical parks to local management. Sometime after 1951, the City of Refugio assumed oversight of King’s Memorial Park. James Wright Steely, *Parks for Texas: Enduring Landscapes of the New Deal*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999): 213-214.

¹¹ Huson, 398-399; “Long Lost Grave of Texas Heroes is Uncovered by Chance Near Refugio,” *McAllen Daily Press*, June 15, 1934.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

of his stylistic interpretation. Texas counties participated in the 1936 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 the state, and legitimized the role a local community played within the larger history of Texas. For Refugio, the Centennial was also an opportunity to build on commemorative and historical work undertaken by the community since 1886. Consequently, Refugio was among the hundreds of counties that competed to demonstrate its historical significance to the Advisory Board of Historians to receive a proportional cut of the \$750,000 statewide Centennial allocation.

The Refugio County Centennial Advisory Board and its Citizens' Centennial Committee jointly drafted an ambitious petition to the advisory board which they presented at the July 18, 1935 hearing at the Capitol in Austin. Refugio Mayor Leonard Jeter, local historian Hobart Huson, Father Oberste, Gertrude Vance, and Jim Power represented the county delegation at the meeting. The appeal outlined Refugio County's historical significance "as a major county in the annals of Texas history" that participated in events that led to Texas independence, cleared the area of Native Americans, and as the home/birthplace of many prominent Texans. They asked for \$54,000 to restore (or replicate) Nuestra Señora del Refugio Mission, conduct archaeological excavations at the mission site, and to erect no less than twelve historical markers and memorials.¹²

Refugio's Centennial appeal focused primarily on the Battle of Refugio and the subsequent execution of Amon B. King's company. They recounted for the board the fate of King's men ("shot in cold blood by their Mexican captors"), their forgotten burial place, and the recent excavation which led to the Texans' reburial in Mt. Cavalry Cemetery. They proposed to enshrine Captain Amon B. King and the "men who were butchered at Refugio," in a mausoleum and erect memorial. The completed shrine "should not be an insignificant affair," the delegation argued, "but should be worthy of the men whose remains are to be deposited in it. It should be of marble or granite, and the names of the heroes carved on its walls...[and] this project could be adequately accomplished for not more than \$10,000."¹³ The committee returned to Refugio confident that the Advisory Board of Historians would recommend to the Commission of Control a generous allocation for their proposed commemorative projects.

In October 1935, the Commission of Control announced they awarded Refugio \$8,500 for monuments and historical markers with a commemorative focus on Amon B. King. Although the sum was considerably less than what the county delegation requested, the local Centennial committee felt gratified to receive the apportionment and to recognize this important local figure.¹⁴ The commission approved an idea put forward by the Board of Historians to move the 1886 marble obelisk to the shared gravesite in Mt. Cavalry Cemetery and replace it with a new monument in King's Park. The Centennial allocation also included funds for correcting the inscription on the obelisk.

Raoul Josset submitted a model for the King's Men monument at a competition organized by the Board of Control on April 2, 1936, but a controversy about their choice for the *Pioneer Woman* monument (Denton, Denton County) halted

¹² Father Oberste is credited with preparing the proposal and presenting it to the Advisory Board of Historians. "Refugio Granted Sum of \$8,500 for Centennial Use," *Victoria Daily Advocate*, October 28, 1935.

¹³ "City Seeks Share Centennial Fund," *Refugio Remarks*, June 21, 1935; Advisory Board of Historians, "Bulletin No. 2," James Frank Dobie Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin.

¹⁴ The initial sum was based on the recommendations of the Advisory Board of Historians, but a review of their report shows conflicting figures for Refugio's proposed allocation that range from \$6,000 to \$11,000. Ultimately, the Commission of Control apportioned \$951.86 for historical markers, \$374.02 for a monument to Mission Refugio, \$331.25 for re-lettering the 1886 King's Men monument, and \$7,229 for the nominated monument to Amon B. King's Men; total of \$8886.13. "Refugio Granted Sum of \$8,500 for Centennial Use," *Victoria Daily Advocate*, October 28, 1935; Tom C. King, *Report of an Examination of the Texas Centennial for the Period from March 24, 1934 to February 28, 1939*, (Austin: Office of the State Auditor and Efficiency Expert, 1939), 68-76.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

the state's prescribed process for deciding artists for Centennial commissions.¹⁵ Within several months, the Board of Control resumed its process for choosing artists for state-sponsored public art. The announcement of Josset's commission included a description of his state-approved design: "The statue, mounted on a pylon, would have a figure of a kneeling man defending the Texas Lone Star with a broken sword, symbolic of the defense by King's men within the walls of the mission at Refugio."¹⁶ When the Board of Control submitted it to the community for review, however, some Refugio citizens vocalized their dissatisfaction at his design. There is no record of whether the state considered revising Josset's interpretation based on local comment. Instead, the Board of Control moved forward with the King's Men monument commission as planned.

With the general form of Josset's artwork decided, the artist set about to design the figure. He visited Refugio in December 1936 to undertake "an extensive study of the whole matter." When he returned to his Dallas studio, Josset recalled he initially made models that embodied the likeness of King, but said "[I] always was confronted with the realization that others besides King had sacrificed their lives on the altar of Texas liberty, and were entitled to be memorialized." Influenced by classic Greek and Roman art, his final interpretation was a semi-nude, allegorical male figure portrayed as kneeling and holding a broken sword. For Josset, the anonymous fighter symbolized "the whole tragedy of Refugio," and he described it as one of his best and most prized works.¹⁷

The *Refugio Timely Remarks* noted the absence of the 1886 King's Men obelisk on March 16, 1937, the 101st anniversary of the Battle of Refugio. Curlee & Son, a Dallas monument maker, removed the monument and re-etched the inscription to include previous omissions and correct names of the men who served in King's auxiliary forces. Once completed, the company installed it over the grave of King and his men at Mt. Cavalry Cemetery in April of the same year. The Advisory Board of Historians' inscription writer, Dr. Lota Spell, provided marker text for both monument inscriptions.

With the original memorial removed, architect Donald Nelson and John Singleton (Board of Control Centennial Division Director) coordinated several contractors to construct the foundation, base, and install the final monument. Irving Dunbar, a local architect, built the foundation in the same spot where the previous monument stood, and centered it within the brick inlay star. On May 21, 1937, Charles F. Roehl, granite contractor, and William Porter installed the 15-ton granite shaft in King's Park. The *Timely Remarks* reported the 2.25-ton bronze statuary portion was placed on top "with considerable difficulty," but "without mishap," the following morning.¹⁸

Local reaction to Josset's statue ranged from disapproval to contempt. The general impression was Josset should have employed a less allegorical way to express the tragedy. Although the artist was influenced by classical sculpture, his audience preferred the figure to bear a likeness to Amon B. King. The Daughters of the Republic were the most vocal critics, and vigorously disapproved of the "undignified" design. According to local tradition, when General Urrea ordered Captain King to his knees, he replied, "I kneel to none but God." To them, Josset's kneeling figure challenged the community's collective memory of the Battle of Refugio and insulted the heroic Texan's character. The Daughters

¹⁵ The controversy over the "nude pioneer woman" delayed artist selections. The Board of Control commissioned artists for state-funded projects (like King's Men) first, but other art projects (those funded jointly by the federal and state allocations) were deferred by a year due to a new process for artist selection that was implemented. *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial MPDF*, National Register nomination, 2018, 22-24.

¹⁶ "Contract Awarded Refugio Memorial," *Corsicana Daily Sun*, July 1, 1935.

¹⁷ "Statue Honors Refugio Heroes," *Refugio Timely Remarks*, May 21, 1937; "Refugio Airs Pet 'Peeve' Against R. Josset's Statue," *Victoria Daily Advocate*, October 1, 1939.

¹⁸ "Statue Honors Refugio Heroes," *Refugio Timely Remarks*, May 21, 1937.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

also argued the symbolism obscured its historical meaning, saying it was “hard for a school child to comprehend.”¹⁹ Others reportedly described the monument as a “monstrosity” that had nothing to do with Texas history.²⁰

Josset said the people of Refugio did not understand the Greek significance embodied in the statue, and that they would appreciate it in time. This insulted Joe Heard, Refugio city secretary and chairman of the local Centennial commission, who replied, “We may not know much about the Greeks, but we do know about King and his men.”²¹ Dissatisfaction then became, what the newspaper called, “a big hue and cry” against the King’s Men monument and plans for its dedication were summarily cancelled. For Refugians, the monument symbolized the local perspective of the state-sponsored Centennial process rather than Amon B. King’s self-sacrifice:

We all know the Centennial Commission did what it wanted to do and the sentiment of local people had little weight with it...We were rationed out what pleased the commission without regard to proper evaluation or good taste. They located the monuments where they pleased and there was nothing anyone could do about it. The result is that many localities are ashamed or hurt by what they got...For instance, we got the monstrosity in the public plaza.²²

Local disdain for the King’s Men monument remained two years later when the *Victoria Advocate* revisited local reaction to Josset’s statue:

Everybody here in Refugio laughs at that statue and claims the big bronze fellow is trying to scratch his back with that broken sword. That sure couldn’t represent King because he didn’t have time to scratch his back...The sculptor was proud of his work all right, but the Irish around here weren’t...We will never be pleased with this statue...It is no nearer dedicated now than it was then.²³

In 1955, the sentiment was restated in Hobart Husons’ two-volume *Refugio: A Comprehensive History* in which he recalled, “the citizens were so disgusted with the monstrous statue upon it they refused to dedicate it; nor has it ever been dedicated.”²⁴

On the 175th anniversary of the Battle of Refugio in 2011, the Refugio County Historical Commission officially dedicated the King’s Men monument. The ceremony acknowledged the community’s original opposition to the monument in 1937 that resulted in the 74-hiatus of its dedication with a historical marker dedicated to the Centennial monument’s history. With a “better late than never,” attitude they celebrated Josset’s powerful interpretation of the battle and King’s men sacrifice to the Republic of Texas.²⁵

Significance in the Area of Art

The Amon B. King’s Men monument in Refugio is one of the most artistically-distinct products commissioned by the State of Texas for the 1936 Centennial. Raoul Josset designed an allegorical interpretative figure to memorialize Texans executed after the Battle of Refugio (Figure 3). The resulting monument differed from most public statuary art erected for the centenary monument program, that exhibited neo-classical design influence. Additionally, the uniquely-

¹⁹ “Republic Daughters Protest State Statue,” *Refugio Timely Remarks*, May 28, 1937.

²⁰ Bernard Brister, “Refugio Airs Pet ‘Peeve’ Against R. Josset’s Statue,” *Victoria Advocate*, October 1, 1939.

²¹ Brister, “Refugio Airs Pet ‘Peeve’ Against R. Josset’s Statue,” *Victoria Advocate*, October 1, 1939.

²² “Monument in Victoria to Hero Astounds Refugians,” *Victoria Advocate*, January 15, 1938.

²³ Brister, “Refugio Airs Pet ‘Peeve’ Against R. Josset’s Statue,” *Victoria Advocate*, October 1, 1939.

²⁴ Huson, 401.

²⁵ J.R. Ortega, “Refugio Dedicates Statue After 74 Year Haitus,” *Victoria Advocate*, March 21, 2011.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

tall base uplifts his artful memorial. Designed by architect Donald Nelson, the 20.6-foot-tall octagonal pylon literally and figuratively elevates the statue to a height not seen in any other Centennial statuary monument.

The statewide Centennial public art program produced 65 monuments and statues across the state. Historian Light Cummins, Ph.D. observed these Centennial statues “hark back to the artistic style of the Beaux Arts neo-classicism that centered in City Beautiful movement.”²⁶ Indeed, commissioned artists (including Josset) sculpted heroic portraits of historic Texans in a timeless style that was designed to appeal to the masses. Only four Centennial monuments or statues feature an allegorical representation as the primary or only artistic component, and two are the work of Josset: the bronze bas-relief angel of the *Mier Expedition and Dawson's Men* monument (Fayette County); *Amon B. King's Men* (Refugio County); Pompeo Coppini's *Spirit of Sacrifice* on the Alamo Cenotaph (Bexar Co.); and Leo Friedlander's *Pioneer Woman* monument (Denton County).²⁷

Josset originally intended the monument to exhibit Captain King's likeness, but upon further study Josset was “confronted with the realization that others besides King had sacrificed their lives on the altar of liberty.” Influenced by Greek and Roman sculptural symbolism, Josset produced a full-rounded bronze figure that embodied “the whole tragedy of Refugio” instead. His design presented an idealized version of a Texas soldier kneeling in defeat, yet it conveyed vitality, youth, strength, courage, and dignity through its modestly-exaggerated physical form and facial features (Figure 4). Although allegory was uncommon in most Centennial art, in *King's Men* Josset powerfully portrayed a theme common to all the celebration's commemorative properties: the heroic Texan.

In creating the monument, Josset and Nelson designed a base to literally elevate the symbolic soldier whose self-sacrifice won Texas independence. The 20.6-foot-tall granite octagonal pylon is the tallest statuary base constructed for the statewide program, and its height forced visitors to view the figure from below as in if reverence to a divine hero. Josset and other Centennial-commissioned artists employed vertical scale within public art design, but *King's Men* is the only statuary figure elevated in that manner.²⁸ The *La Salle* monument, also Josset's work, is a comparable study in that it is a 14-foot-tall full-rounded and high-relief statuary within a 22-foot-tall wedge base. Both monuments project vertical scale, but the verticality of *King's Men* is enhanced by the relatively narrow and lighter base. In 1936, the Centennial urged Texans to memorialize the self-sacrifice of their forbearers, and *King's Men* monument was a tangible and permanent product of that mission.

Raoul Jean Josset (1899-1957)²⁹

“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, 1899.³⁰ Educated at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and winner of the prestigious Prix de Rome, Josset 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

²⁶ Light Townsend Cummins, Ph.D., “Statues of the State,” *The Medallion* 48, no.7-8 (July/August 2011): 9.

²⁷ This discussion does not include monuments and statues created for the central Centennial exposition in Dallas which featured numerous symbolic figures illustrating Texas history and industry. In general, the central exposition fair grounds were architecturally and artistically modern compared with the statewide program. Furthermore, the nominated property is submitted under the MPDF *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*, a document that focused on the statewide commemorative building program. Within that program there are monuments that employ symbolism as an accompanying artistic design to a feature that is classical or neo-classical in style.

²⁸ Taller monuments include the *San Jacinto Memorial* (Harris Co.), *Alamo Cenotaph* (Bexar Co.), *Mier Expedition and Dawson's Men* monument (Fayette Co.), *James Walker Fannin's Men* (Goliad Co.).

²⁹ Section adapted from *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*, 24-25.

³⁰ “Raoul Josset Completes His 8-Foot Childress Memorial,” *Dallas Morning News*, April 3, 1938.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

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 1957.³¹

Donald S. Nelson (1907-1992)

Dallas architect Donald S. Nelson's contribution to King's Men and the Centennial public art project is overshadowed by his later accomplishments. Nelson was born in Chicago, Illinois on February 10, 1907. His formal training began at age 19 at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Fontainebleau, France. Upon his return stateside, he earned a bachelor of architecture degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). After winning the prestigious Paris Prize, Nelson returned to France in 1927 to attend the Ecole Normal Superieur des Beaux Arts. The young architect began his professional career in 1930 working as a junior member of the Chicago firm Bennett, Parsons, and Frost.³²

Nelson's work for the 1933 Chicago Century of Progress Exposition earned him the attention of Dallas architect George Dahl who invited Nelson, among others, in 1935 to assist in the design of the Texas Centennial Exposition complex. When the project concluded in 1936, Nelson remained in Dallas and established a private practice. He responded to the Texas State Board of Control's open call for an architect to design bases for Centennial statues and monuments. Nelson won the contract and, between 1936 and 1939, he collaborated with commissioned sculptors, monument makers, stone quarries, and local communities to plan and execute the foundations for 24 public art projects.

Following World War II, Nelson entered the height of his professional career when he formed an architectural firm with Thomas D. Broad (Broad and Nelson) in Dallas. Nelson became a regionally-significant architect known for adding sculptural elements to his projects. No doubt his early career working with Centennial monuments introduced him to sculptors, like Raoul Josset, and influenced his architectural aesthetic. He designed many public and commercial buildings across the state, and is recognized for several noteworthy buildings in Dallas and Waco. These projects include: the Dallas Mercantile Bank Complex (1940-1947), a contributing building in the Downtown Dallas Historic District; the Texas Memorial Grand Lodge Temple in Waco (1950); the original passenger terminal at Love Field in Dallas (1957); and the Scottish Rite Library and Museum in Waco (1969).³³

³¹ "Texas Mourns Tragic Loss of Raoul Josset, Sculptor," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, July 21, 1957.

³² *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Nelson, Donald Siegfried," accessed September 01, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fnejz>.

³³ *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Nelson, Donald Siegfried," accessed September 01, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fnejz>.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Conclusion

The *Amon B. King's Men* monument in Refugio was one of the major projects of the state-directed effort to commemorate Texas history in the 1930s. The monument is one of four allegorical representations of Texas history produced for the Centennial, but the community rejected the artist's symbolic interpretation. 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*. King's Men is an excellent example of the statewide public art program. 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 1937, the year the statue was erected.

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

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Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

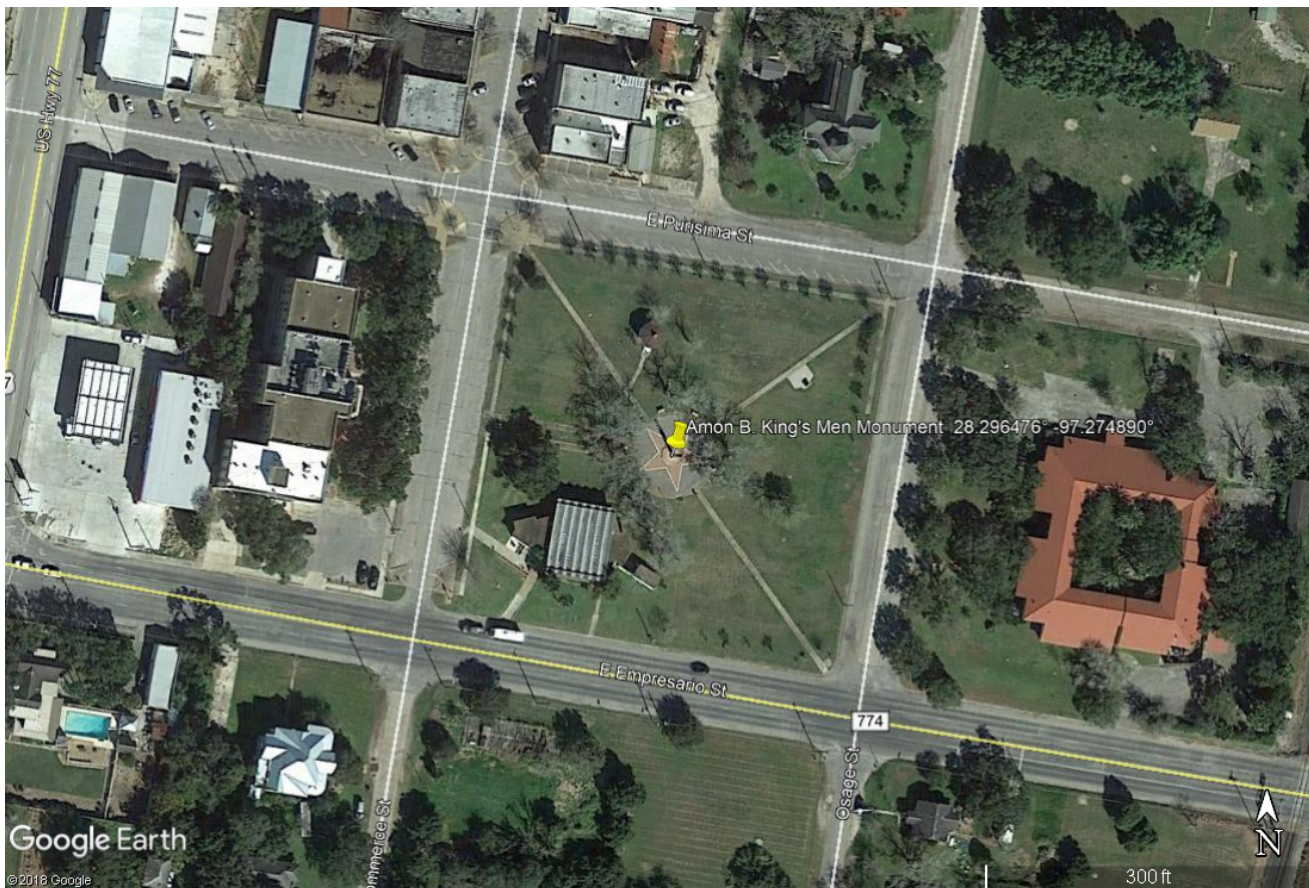
Maps

Map 1: Refugio County, Texas



Map X: Google Earth, accessed October 3, 2017

Latitude: 28.296476°N Longitude: -97.274890°W

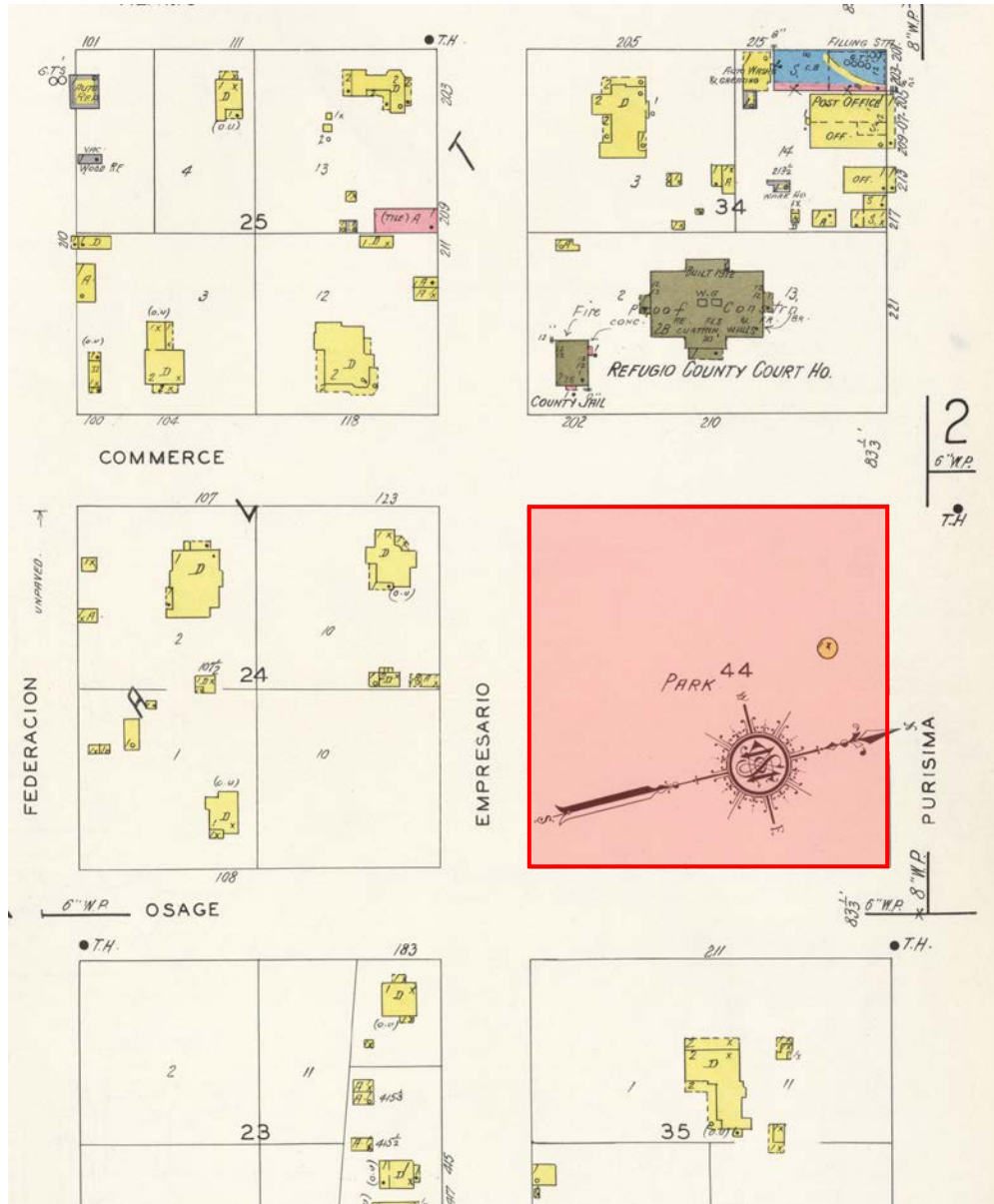


Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Figures

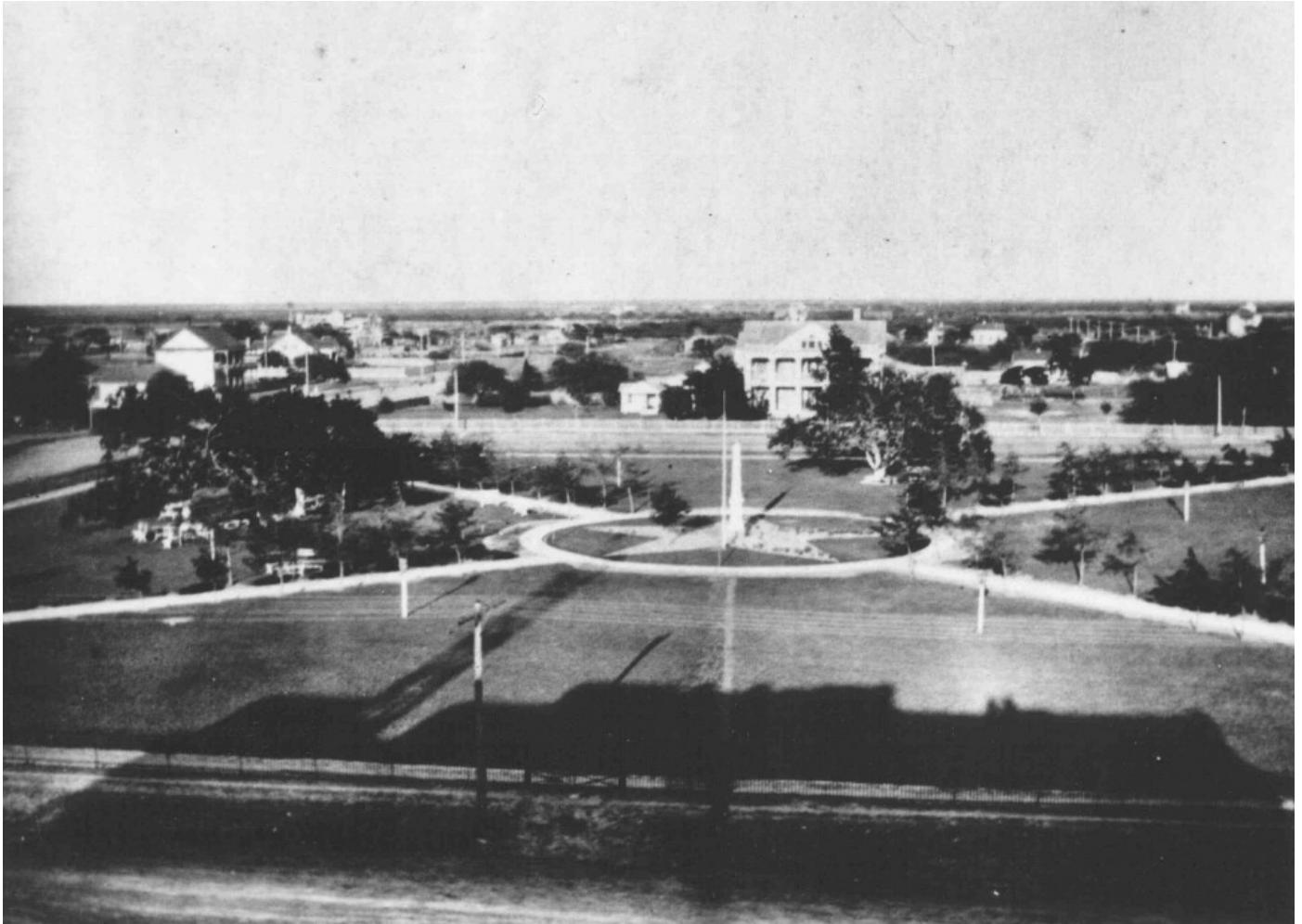
Figure 1: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Refugio 1935. The map was drawn when the 1886 obelisk monument stood in King's Memorial Park (in red) but it does not indicate its location within the park.

Source: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/p-r/txu-sanborn-refugio-1935-5.jpg>



Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

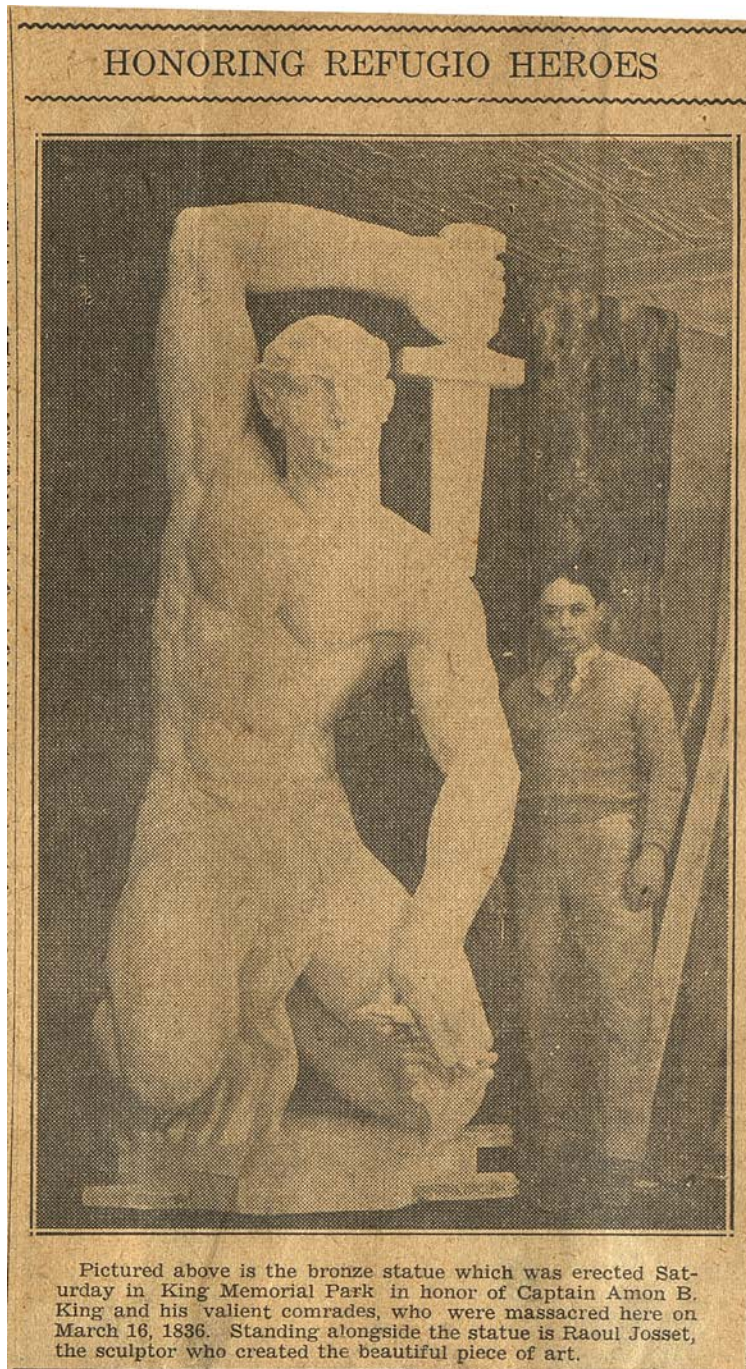
Figure 2: Historic photograph of King's Memorial Park, c. 1934, showing 1886 obelisk to King's Men in the center. The photographer took the photo from atop the county courthouse and the camera faces east. Source: Texas Coastal Bend Collection



Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Figure 3: Raoul Josset with the plaster cast of the Amon B. King monument. "The opinion has been freely expressed that a simpler way could have been found to express the tragedy in Refugio...but to Mr. Josset...true art has no compromise, and he said that he was confident that in time Refugians would come to appreciate his work as he himself did."

Source: *Refugio Timely Remarks*, May 21, 1937. Courtesy of Dennis M. O'Connor Library, Refugio.



Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Figure 4: Plaster cast of the King's Men monument in Josset's Dallas studio, 1937.

Source: Raoul Josset (1899-1957) Archival records and photographs, 1927-1967, Public Art Commissions, the Alexander Architectural Archives, the General Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin.



Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Figure 5: Completed King's Men monument in King's Memorial Park, n.d.
Source: Raoul Josset (1899-1957) Archival records and photographs, 1927-1967, Public Art Commissions, the Alexander Architectural Archives, the General Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin.



Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Figure 6: *Amon B. King's Men* Monument inscription text. Note: Panels 7 and 8 depict the State Seal of Texas.
Source: Texas and Harold Schoen, eds. *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence; the Report of the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations*. Austin: Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, 1938.

[panel 1]

ERECTED BY THE
STATE OF TEXAS
IN MEMORY OF CAPTAIN AMON B. KING
AND
OTHER TEXAS SOLDIERS
KILLED IN ACTION
OR CAPTURED AND
AFTERWARDS SLAIN
AS A RESULT OF
THE FIGHTING AT
REFUGIO MARCH 14 15 16 1836.

[panel 2]

SNEAD LEDBETTER
JAMES B. MURPHY
JAMES MURPHY
J.B. RODGERS
ANTOINE SAYLE
WILLIAM SHELTON
WILLIAM N. SIMPSON
GAVIN H. SMITH
JOHN C. STEWART
ROBERT A. TOLER
JOHN WARD
CHRISTOPHER WINTERS
SAMUEL WOOD

[panel 3]

SAMUEL ANDERSON
WILLIAM S. ARMSTRONG
LESLIE H. BRADY
JAMES HENRY CALLISON
JOHN H. COLGROVE
THOMAS COOK
FIELDS DAVIS
HENRY EADOCK
LEWIS C. GIBBS
JAMES HENLEY
JOEL G. HETH
JESSIE HUMPHRIES
HARVEY H. KIRK
WILLIAM R. JOHNSON

[panel 4]

IN THE EARLY MORNING OF MARCH
14, 1835 TWENTY EIGHT TEXANS
UNDER AMON B. KING SEPARATED
FROM COL. WILLIAM WARD'S COMMAND
IN THE MISSION CHURCH AND LATE
THAT DAY IN A WOOD ON THE
WEST BANK OF MISSION RIVER
A HALF MILE BELOW THE TOWN
FOUGHT A DESPERATE BATTLE
WITH PART OF GENERAL URREA'S
MEXICAN COMMAND * FIVE TEXANS
WERE KILLED AND FIVE WOUNDED
ONE OF WHOM JOINED COLONEL WARD
IN THE CHURCH * THE OTHERS ESCAPED
BUT WERE CAPTURED NEXT DAY

[panel 5]

ON MARCH 14 1836 LIEUTENANT
COLONEL WILLIAM WARD WITH
LESS THAN ONE HUNDRED AND
FIFTY MEN SUCCESSFULLY
DEFENDED THE CHURCH OF THE
REFUGIO MISSION AGAINST
FOUR SUCCESSIVE ATTACKS BY
GENERAL JOSE URREA'S COMMAND
AND MADE HIS ESCAPE FROM
THE CHURCH THAT NIGHT AFTER
HAVING LOST ONLY THREE MEN
WOUNDED * TWO LEFT TO CARE
FOR THEM AND A FEW OTHERS
AS COURIERS OR WHILE
SEPARATED FROM HIS COMMAND

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

[panel 6]

ON MARCH 16 1836 CAPTAIN KING
AND FOURTEEN OF HIS MEN WHO HAD
BEEN MADE PRISONERS BY GENERAL
URREA'S CAVALRY THE DAY BEFORE
WERE MARCHED TO THE SLOPE OF
THE HILL ON THE GOLIAD ROAD
ABOUT ONE MILE FROM THE REFUGIO
CHURCH AND SHOT * * * THEIR BONES
WERE LATER BURIED WHERE THEY FELL
BY JOHN HYNES A TWELVE YEAR OLD
LAD OF REFUGIO WHO HAD BEEN
THEIR FRIEND * * * JAMES MURPHY OF
REFUGIO * COLONEL FANNIN'S COURIER
KILLED NEARBY ON MARCH 14 * WAS
BURIED IN THEIR COMMON GRAVE

Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Photographs

Photo 1: King's Men monument in King's Memorial Park, Refugio—camera faces east, February 15, 2018.



Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Photo 2: King's Men monument (front/west elevation)—camera faces east, February 15, 2018.



Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Photo 3: King's Men monument (south elevation)—camera faces north, February 15, 2018.



Photo 4: King's Men monument (northeast elevation)—camera faces southwest, February 15, 2018.



Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Photo 5: Bronze inscription ("Panel 5") on granite pylon base—camera faces west, February 15, 2018.



Photo 6: Bronze-cast state seal on granite pylon base—camera faces south, February 15, 2018.



Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Photo 7: Detail of King's Men statuary figure—camera faces east, February 15, 2018.



Photo 8: King's Men statuary figure (front/west elevation)—camera faces east, February 15, 2018.



Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Photo 9: King's Men statuary figure (south elevation)—camera faces north, February 15, 2018.



Photo 10: King's Men statuary figure (south elevation)—camera faces north, February 15, 2018.



Amon B. King's Men Monument, Refugio, Refugio County, Texas

Photo 11: King's Men statuery figure (north elevation)—camera faces south, February 15, 2018.



~end~