

# SBR Draft

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 1. Name of Property

Historic Name: DeWitt County Monument

Other name/site number: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial

### 2. Location

Street & number: US 87 and E. Courthouse St., Settler's Park

City or town: Cuero

State: Texas

County: DeWitt

Not for publication: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

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Historic Preservation Officer

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

DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

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

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DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt 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:** 1936

**Significant Dates:** 1936

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

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

**Architect/Builder:** Josset, Raoul (sculptor), Page & Southerland (architects)

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets 8-7 through 8-13)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheet 9-14)

### 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

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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: 29.088244°N      Longitude: -97.276099°W

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The monument is located on a 1.25-acre triangular parcel of state-owned land, locally-named Settler's Park, bordered by State Highway 87 (north) and E Court House St. (south). 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. 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: June 1, 2018

## Additional Documentation

- Maps**      (see continuation sheets MAP-14)
- Additional items**      (see continuation sheets FIGURE-16 through FIGURE-20)
- Photographs**      (see continuation sheets PHOTO-21 through PHOTO-25)

DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

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## Photograph Log

DeWitt County Monument  
Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas  
Photographer: Gregory Smith  
Date: February 16, 2018

Photo 1: DeWitt County Monument—camera facing west

Photo 2: DeWitt County Monument—camera facing west

Photo 3: DeWitt County Monument bas-relief detail—camera facing west

Photo 4: DeWitt County Monument plaque detail—camera facing west

Photo 5: DeWitt County Monument side elevation—camera facing south

Photo 6: DeWitt County Monument back elevation—camera facing east

**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.

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## Narrative Description

The 1936 *DeWitt County* monument is an 8-foot-tall pink granite slab commemorative memorial with a bronze plaque, designed by architects Page & Southerland and sculptor Raoul Josset, in Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas. Its design is representative of a monument slab sub-type (Type Y) that was used for fifteen Texas Centennial county markers and identified as such in *Buildings and Monuments of the Texas Centennial MPS*.<sup>1</sup> The base measures 3'9" wide, narrows by 1' at the top of the monument, and is 1'2" in depth; it has chamfered edges. Josset designed the 5-foot-tall bronze-cast panel attached to the face with a bas-relief that depicts *empresario* (colonization agent) Green DeWitt who holds a document in his right hand and directs background figures—a man in homespun clothing on horseback and a pioneer couple in a covered wagon—towards an unknown destination. Wildflowers and succulents are sculpted around DeWitt's feet. Below the figures, the United States and Texas flags border a star encircled by a wreath of live oak and olive leaves. A marker inscription (Figure 5) completes the plaque. Originally, five 1.5" bronze sunflowers were evenly-spaced in a horizontal line below the plaque, but those are missing.

The monument was erected in 1936 on a 1.25-acre triangular parcel on the eastern edge of Cuero, the county seat. The parcel, known locally as Settler's Park, is bounded by State Highway 87 (E. Broadway St. or "Victoria Highway") on the north and E. Courthouse St. (formerly Victoria Rd.) on its south side. The road on its western boundary is unnamed. *DeWitt County* is oriented eastward, facing motorists on SH 87 as they approach Cuero. Historically, a gravel driveway bisected the parcel in front of the monument and allowed vehicles to view the property up close. Sometime between 2008 and 2012, the City of Cuero filled the drive and landscaped the entire parcel. The work included memorial brick pavers that were set in front of the nominated monument.

The *De Witt County* monument retains excellent integrity and is in good condition as stipulated by the registration requirements outlined in *Buildings and Monuments of the Texas Centennial MPS*.<sup>2</sup> It retains good integrity of materials, design, and workmanship. The workmanship of skilled architects is reflected in the design of the granite slab and the work of master monument makers reflected in its execution. The patina of the bronze plaque that bears Josset's design has naturally faded, but his artistry is evident in the bas-relief interpretation of the county's history. At the time of its construction, five bronze sunflowers were in a horizontal line at its base, and those are now gone. Two, shallow round-shaped chips, approximately the shape and size of two-inch round rocks, are evident in the granite and were the result of vandalism in 1936. Overall, the materials that defined this Centennial monument type—the granite base and bronze plaque—are present and in good condition. It retains integrity of location beside a state highway, oriented towards that major thoroughfare for the convenience of viewing by tourists and passersby. The historic landscaping that once allowed motorists to drive up to the monument no longer exists, but the parcel retains a compatible setting as a site for local and state historical monuments. *De Witt County* conveys the feeling of a monument and retains markings that designate its association with the 1936 Texas Centennial.

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<sup>1</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial MPS, Statewide, Texas, 52.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 53.

DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

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## Statement of Significance

The DeWitt County monument in Cuero, Texas is a granite and bronze commemorative memorial commissioned by the State of Texas for the 1936 Centennial. Conceived as one of 15 “county” (Type Y) slab monuments by the Advisory Board of Historians under the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, it was among thousands of commemorative properties erected between 1936 and 1939.<sup>3</sup> As one of the few monuments actually erected in 1936, the Cuero community dedicated it during its three-day Centennial Turkey Trot event. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places 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 the product of a concerted statewide effort whereby state and local governments, a variety of private organizations, and individuals worked to commemorate historic persons and events important to Texas history. The monument is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of Art as a work by master sculptor, Raoul Josset. It meets Criteria Consideration F (Commemorative Properties) 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 for the DeWitt County monument is 1936, the year it was erected.

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## Cuero, DeWitt County<sup>4</sup>

Kentucky-born Green DeWitt (1787-1835), inspired by Moses and Stephen F. Austin’s Texas settlements, applied to the Mexican government at Saltillo for a colonization grant in April 1825. Upon authorization, he began to settle Anglo and Mexican families in an area that included parts of present-day Gonzales, Caldwell, Guadalupe, Lavaca, and DeWitt counties. The first 39 Anglo settlers of present-day DeWitt County constructed their farms along the Guadalupe River that runs southwest of modern Cuero. In 1846, the first post office was established in a small settlement called Cuero (now Old Cuero), four miles north of the present site. That year the State of Texas formed DeWitt County from the Gonzales Municipality, which included parts of DeWitt’s colony.

Modern-day Cuero, incorporated in 1875, first developed as the midway stopping point on the *Gulf, Western Texas, and Pacific Railway* between Indianola, then a major Texas port, and San Antonio. The rail line encouraged new commercial and residential construction in Cuero in the months before it was completed and led to continued economic expansion. As Cuero economically out-paced nearby Clinton, residents voted Cuero to replace it the DeWitt County seat in 1876. Two additional rail lines—the *San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway* (1886) and the *Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway* (1906)—and overland trade routes that ran through the town solidified Cuero as the county’s primary commercial trade center through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Texas was the leading state for turkey production. The industry was concentrated in DeWitt, Fayette, and Gonzalez counties. In addition to poultry-raising, truck farming, cottonseed oil and products, and livestock-raising supported Cuero’s economy. Starting in 1906, Cuero shipped processed turkeys nationwide, and the local industry expanded when a turkey dressing house opened in the community. By 1922, it was the one of the largest poultry markets in the Southwest. In 1912, the Cuero Chamber of Commerce organized the first Turkey Trot, an event in which farmers drove thousands of turkeys down the city’s main streets at the start of the November market season. The spectacle brought nationwide attention to Cuero, and it became a community

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<sup>3</sup> The historic context for the statewide Texas Centennial is detailed in *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial MPS*.

<sup>4</sup> This section derived from *Handbook of Texas Online*, Craig H. Roell, "DEWITT COUNTY," accessed July 12, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcd07>; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Craig H. Roell, "CUERO, TX," accessed July 12, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hfc18>; and *Handbook of Texas Online*, Diana J. Kleiner, "TURKEY TROT," accessed July 12, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/lkt05>.

## DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

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institution.<sup>5</sup> In 1933, one woman summarized the industry's local significance: "The turkey is inescapable in Cuero. He occupies the center of the stage psychologically as much as the *frijole* in Mexico or the roast beef joint in New England."<sup>6</sup> The agribusiness and shipping economy fostered steady growth in Cuero from 1887 (2,500 citizens) to its peak in 1969 (7,800). In 2000, Cuero's population of 6,571 evidenced is gradual decline.

Cuero, like the rest of Texas, experienced economic hardships in the early 1930s. However, city leaders capitalized on state and federal relief programs, including Centennial funds, to undertake municipal infrastructure and beautification improvements to attract tourism and investment in Cuero. Federal aid for highway spending increased in 1931-1933, and Congress passed additional emergency matching loans and grants for state road programs.<sup>7</sup> The Texas Highway Department and the City of Cuero used these funds to re-route, extend, and widen E. Broadway Street in Cuero (Figures 1-2) to meet with the new Highway 87. The 1931 project produced a triangular tract of land where the old Victoria Rd. (now E. Courthouse St.) and the new highway met. Locals referred to the junction as "the old and new Victoria highways."

Concurrent to the highway project, Cuero received federal support from the Works Progress Administration to develop a park at the eastern periphery of the city. The 210-acre Cuero State Park (now Municipal Park), dedicated in 1936, was constructed with its primary (north) entrance facing the new Highway 87. That entrance, just east of the triangular junction of the new and old Victoria highways, led directly to the main recreation building.<sup>8</sup> The road and park projects in East Cuero spurred city leaders to call for roadside beautification to welcome visitors coming into Cuero. The *Cuero Record* directly referenced the triangular parcel outside the park entrance when it declared, "Steps should be taken at once looking to the beautification of the property bordering on the two [roadway] entrances." The editor suggested a small parkway, like one in neighboring Yoakum, be built on at the junction. It was another five years, however, until the National Youth Administration and the Highway Department completed the roadside park project on the parcel (Figures 3-4).<sup>9</sup>

### **DeWitt County Monument**

The DeWitt County monument is a commemorative memorial the State of Texas commissioned for the 1936 Centennial in Cuero, DeWitt County. Conceived as one of 15 "county" (Type Y) slab monuments by the Advisory Board of Historians under the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, it was among hundreds of commemorative properties erected between 1936 and 1939.<sup>10</sup> It was one of the few monuments actually completed in the centennial year, and the Cuero community dedicated it during its extravagant 3-day Centennial Turkey Trot event on November 11, 1936.

The Centennial offered Texas towns unparalleled publicity through a nationwide marketing campaign that touted the state's heritage tourism and industry. Texans were encouraged to "Think, Talk, Write" the Centennial, and plan community celebrations to drive tourists from the Dallas exposition to every region of the state. In 1935, Cuero planned to "cash in" on the Centennial tourism boom by reviving its annual Turkey Trot event, a parade of

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<sup>5</sup> The name referenced Irving Berlin's 1912 song "The Turkey Trot," a popular tune of the day that started an equally-popular dance craze across the nation. At least one critic of Cuero's Turkey Trot suggested renaming the event. In 1922, the *State Press* advised calling it the "Cuero turkey toddle," inasmuch as bipeds, such as turkeys, can't trot. They argued, "in the interest of the masses, with some consideration for the turkeys and a bit of sympathy for the lexicographers and philologists...Turkey toddle would be as euphonious and descriptive as turkey trot." "Contentious," *Dallas Morning News*, October 31, 1922.

<sup>6</sup> "Cuero Women Tired of Decline in Turkey Trot Interest," *Cuero Record*, December 21, 1933.

<sup>7</sup> *Historic Road Infrastructure of Texas, 1866-1965* MPS, 36-37.

<sup>8</sup> "Local Park to Be a Playground for South Central Texas," *Cuero Record*, December 31, 1935.

<sup>9</sup> "Roadside Park Promises Be Beauty Spot," *Cuero Record*, May 1, 1936.

<sup>10</sup> The historic context for the statewide Texas Centennial is detailed in *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial* MPS.



## DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

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“thousands upon thousands strutting gobblers and humble hens” that made a spectacle of the county’s lucrative turkey-raising industry. In anticipation of an influx of visitors, the city also focused on completing municipal improvements—new parks, beautification projects, and roads—that would give tourists a favorable impression of Cuero.

When the Advisory Board of Historians announced the start of its application process for state Centennial funds in the summer of 1935, the DeWitt County Centennial Committee submitted a written proposal asking \$2,000 to stage a historical pageant during the Centennial-edition Turkey Trot celebration. They advertised that the citizens of Cuero would not be content with staging merely “the greatest, most interesting Turkey Trot parade,” rather the 1936 Trot would “in itself will be worth the trip to Texas.” They proposed a three-day-long event to include a grand parade, a historical pageant (with appearances by “old timers who actually participated in these thrilling adventures,”) fine arts, industrial and agricultural exhibits, carnivals, colorful dances and balls, “a real” Texas rodeo, races, and football games. The feature event would, of course, be the turkey trot in downtown Cuero and, for out of state visitors, the “strutting birds, gobbling lustily and whistling with that peculiar note will occupy the center of the stage.”<sup>11</sup>

Although the Commission of Control could authorize state funds for pageants, they accepted the Advisory Board of Historians policy that favored permanent memorials and monuments over pageants.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the Board of Historians denied DeWitt’s application and, instead, recommended the Commission of Control approve a \$1,000 granite monument with a bronze plaque recognizing the early history of DeWitt County for the statewide Centennial. Because local enthusiasm for the Centennial centered on promoting tourism and industry, Cuero was disappointed by the planned permanent monument. The *Cuero Record* reported, “While we appreciate the recognition given DeWitt County, we are still hoping...for funds to stage a historical pageant during the Trot.”<sup>13</sup>

For the Advisory Board of Historians, the DeWitt County monument was part of an attempted thematic approach to recognize the 20 Texas municipalities whose delegates signed the Texas Declaration of Independence at the 1836 Constitutional Convention.<sup>14</sup> Their recommendation for DeWitt stated: “A member of the DeWitt County Centennial Board has advanced the claim...that some of the thirty-two men who entered [the Battle of] the Alamo were from the present County of DeWitt. Whether this be true or not, the county was a part of the Gonzales Municipality at the time the first shot of the revolution [at Cost, Texas] was fired.”<sup>15</sup> The threshold for recognizing DeWitt was, apparently, reduced to its association within the larger Revolution-era district. They did not, however,

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<sup>11</sup> “50,000 May Witness Unique Spectacle Here on November 11<sup>th</sup>,” *Cuero Record*, December 31, 1935.

<sup>12</sup> At its first official meeting, the Advisory Board of Historians approved the following motion: “[It] shall be the policy of the Historical Board in recommending the allocation of money granted by the State of Texas for a Centennial celebration to recommend that it be spent only for...permanent memorials...[and] none of the money be spent directly on pageants or other such ephemeral celebrations.” Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, Advisory Board of Historians, “Bulletin No. 1,” 1, Louis Kemp Papers, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

<sup>13</sup> “Town Talk,” *Cuero Record*, October 8, 1935.

<sup>14</sup> The Advisory Board of Historians’ papers, correspondence, and reports strongly, but not implicitly, suggest they intended to commemorate the 20 (out of 23 total) municipalities that sent delegates to Washington-on-the-Brazos for the Constitutional Convention and to sign the Texas Declaration of Independence on March 2, 1836. In their October 1935 report, the historians’ justified 14 of the 20 recommended \$1,000 granite slab monuments as counties that were representative of the 20 municipalities. It is thought that the board did chose to recognize the 6 remaining municipalities with larger monuments. Indeed, a 12 of the 15 *completed* monuments within this sub-type represented one of the municipalities (which later became counties under the same name or within the boundary): Bastrop (Mina Municipality), Colorado, DeWitt (Gonzales Municipality), Jasper, Jackson, Jefferson, Liberty, Matagorda, Sabine, Shelby, San Patricio, and Washington.

<sup>15</sup> Advisory Board of Texas Historians, “Majority Report on Major Projects,” in “Reports of the Advisory Board of Historians to the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations,” J. Frank Dobie Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, 21.

## DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

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note (or know at the time) that the Gonzales delegates (John Fisher and Matthew Caldwell) were not from modern DeWitt County. Dr. Lota M. Spell, an employee of the Advisory Board of Historians, researched and produced the DeWitt monument inscription in August 1936. The final marker text (Figure 5) listed the county's founding pioneers and participants in the Texas Revolution, but it did not reference the Declaration of Independence. Ultimately, the granite slab and bronze plaque "county markers" failed to communicate the intended theme.<sup>16</sup>

As the State Board of Control commenced its process for monument planning and construction in February and 1936, Cueroans found a way to integrate the new marker into its municipal improvement plans and the Centennial Turkey Trot.<sup>17</sup> In May 1936, the *Cuero Record* described plans for the transformation of the "weedy and swampy" triangular tract of land between the old and new Victoria highways at the east edge of town. They remarked at how the new "beauty spot" would be a welcome view to incoming auto tourists. An outfit of the National Youth Administration constructed rock retaining walls around the park parameter and stone benches. Landscaping plans, scheduled for completion the following February, included a heart-shaped "lake" and stone fountain to be built in the center of the triangle to manage the flood-prone parcel. The Texas Highway Department also planned to landscape the small tract with roses, live oak trees, *huisache* (sweet acacia) bushes, crepe myrtles, yaupon, and senisas (Texas sage). The agency also completed a gravel road that bisected the tip of the triangle to connect the two highways (Figures 3-4).<sup>18</sup>

Roadside park construction coincided with the DeWitt County Centennial Committee's deliberations over where to place its Centennial monument. They decided the gravel conversion at the tip of the new triangle park was the "most attractive" location for it. Most important, however, was its conspicuous locale: "More visitors to this section will see the marker at that point than perhaps any other."<sup>19</sup> When the Board of Control approved the chosen location in July, the agency told the Cuero Chamber of Commerce they would make every effort to complete the monument in time for the Turkey Trot.<sup>20</sup> Taking them at their word, the Cueroans planned its dedication as a "timely and fitting" feature of the event, and scheduled it for November 11.

The Board of Control awarded contracts to Austin architecture firm Page & Southerland and sculptor Raoul Jossset to design the monument scheme and bronze plaque.<sup>21</sup> The architects designed a general scheme ("sub-type Y") to physically and artistically unify the 15 county monuments, including DeWitt County, recommended by the Board of Historians. Described by state leaders as "a most beautiful and unusual design," the proposed monument was an 8-foot-tall granite slab with bronze bas-relief plaque featuring the likeness of Green DeWitt, the county namesake, pointing the way for a trail of prairie schooners.<sup>22</sup> By August, Dallas monument makers J.W. Cearly & Sons won the state bid to furnish the monument, and the *Cuero Record* reported in late September 1936 that their

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<sup>16</sup> Only 15 of the 20 recommended granite slab monuments were constructed. Despite their uniform physical appearance, three—Burnet County, El Paso County, and Crosby County—had no association with the theme. Furthermore, the inscriptions for monuments recommended under the theme failed to express the unifying approach the Advisory Board of Historians conceptualized. Members of the advisory board privately expressed their disappointment with the monuments. Louis W. Kemp to J. Frank Dobie, August 4, 1937, Dobie Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>17</sup> For the Board of Control's standard process for planning and constructing monuments, see *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial MPS*, 25-30.

<sup>18</sup> "Roadside Park Promises Be Beauty Spot," *Cuero Record*, May 1, 1935.

<sup>19</sup> "Will Locate Monument in Roadside Park," *Cuero Record*, May 15, 1936; "Editorials," *Cuero Record*, May 20, 1936.

<sup>20</sup> "Approve Site for Memorial," *Cuero Record*, July 24, 1936.

<sup>21</sup> Drafts of Centennial monuments show Page & Southerland and Jossset began working with the Centennial Division in February 1936, but their contracts were not signed until June and August 1936. Minutes, Texas State Board of Control, Centennial Division, June 2 and August 28, 1936, Centennial Division, Texas State Board of Control. Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

<sup>22</sup> "Contract is Let for Memorial," *Cuero Record*, August 25, 1936.

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work was progressing rapidly, adding hopefully, “The monument will definitely be ready for dedication on November 11.”

On November 11, 1936, the DeWitt County Monument was mostly finished. Cearly & Sons constructed the concrete base and erected the pink granite slab in the roadside park the first week of November. A temporary, plaster-cast plaque adorned the monument face for the dedication, but no one reported the difference. Scheduled between the Turkey Trot rodeo (3pm) and the anti-aircraft aerial demonstration (7:15pm), a modest service was held for the DeWitt County Monument. The previous day’s torrential downpours created an unfortunate quagmire of the park grounds and hastened the dedication. Sam C. Lackey, member of the county Centennial committee, presided before the crowd on an improvised platform. After the Cuero Turkey Trot band played the National Anthem and Reverend Thomas Sumners’ opening invocation, Lieutenant Governor Walter Woodul, “briefly and effectively” presented the memorial to the county. Dr. John Burns, son of DeWitt County’s first-born Anglo-American accepted it on the county’s behalf. Finally, Nina Whittington, a descendant of Green DeWitt, and Anne Schleicher unveiled the granite monument.<sup>23</sup>

Before the installation of the completed bronze plaque in March 1936, local boys repeatedly defaced and abused the DeWitt County monument. On several occasions, the “thoughtless youngsters” hurled rocks that broke the temporary plaster plaque and chipped the granite slab. “Cuero boys” also daubed the monument with mud and clay that furthered damaged the temporary plaque. Speaking on behalf of the town, the *Cuero Record* chided the young hooligans: “What kind of fun the boys get out of destroying this memorial we can’t see,” and “Boys should show more respect for the memory of these DeWitt pioneers.” Officials also released a warning that the penalty for defacing government property ranged from a simple fine to a penitentiary sentence.<sup>24</sup> Following the public rebuke, the monument was left alone. On March 9, 1937, the newspaper announced that Cearly & Sons finally mounted the bronze plaque and suggested that readers “Drive out and view it. It is a work of art.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Raoul Jean Josset (1899-1957)<sup>26</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>27</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.

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<sup>23</sup> “State Memorial to Pioneers Dedicated,” *Cuero Record*, November 12, 1936.

<sup>24</sup> “Town Talk,” *Cuero Record*, January 17, 1937; “Cuero Boys Get Warning,” *Cuero Record*, January 17, 1937; “Town Talk,” *Cuero Record*, January 18, 1937.

<sup>25</sup> “Town Talk,” *Cuero Record*, March 10, 1937.

<sup>26</sup> Section adapted from *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*, 24-25.

<sup>27</sup> “Raoul Josset Completes His 8-Foot Childress Memorial,” *Dallas Morning News*, April 3, 1938.

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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>28</sup>

### Page & Southerland<sup>29</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>30</sup> The partners closed the business and, temporarily, went their separate ways.

In 1935, they reopened in Austin and sought new commissions. Page & Southerland responded to the Board of Control's 1936 bid to design schemes for Centennial markers and monuments. For the young firm, it is likely the contract to design 622 historical markers and 26 monuments was a means to pay the bills. Between February and November 1936, the young firm produced schemes for historical markers, grave markers, and monuments that the State Board of Control used to construct these Centennial property types. The two scheme sub-types for slab monuments—Type X and Y—are differentiated by size (8'-feet-tall versus 6'-feet-tall) and the style of bronze plaque. Type Y monuments, often called "county monuments," were adorned with bronze bas-relief plaques that reflected the historical subject of the commemorated county. Page & Southerland's Centennial commission, a job outside their typical area of work, imparted a lasting contribution to the Texas cultural landscape.

There are few documents that record Page & Southerland's Centennial work, but available records show that 1936 marked the beginning of their productive careers.<sup>31</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.

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<sup>28</sup> "Texas Mourns Tragic Loss of Raoul Josset, Sculptor," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, July 21, 1957.

<sup>29</sup> Section adapted from *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*, 23.

<sup>30</sup> "Louis Southerland Still Holding Fast to Drawing Pen That Paints Success," *The Austin Statesman*, December 29, 1947.

<sup>31</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).

DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

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## Conclusion

The 1936 *DeWitt County* monument in Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas was one of 15 “county markers,” among hundreds of other commemorative properties, constructed by the State of the Texas for the 1936 Centennial. Austin architectural firm Page & Southerland designed the monument base and sculptor Raoul Josset artfully-represented Green DeWitt, the county founder, in a bronze bas-relief plaque. 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*. It is significant in the area of Art as a 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 1936, the year the monument was erected.

DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

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DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

## Maps

Map 1: DeWitt County, Texas



Map 2: Google Earth, accessed March 1, 2018

Latitude: 29.088244°N

Longitude: -97.276099°W



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DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

## Figures

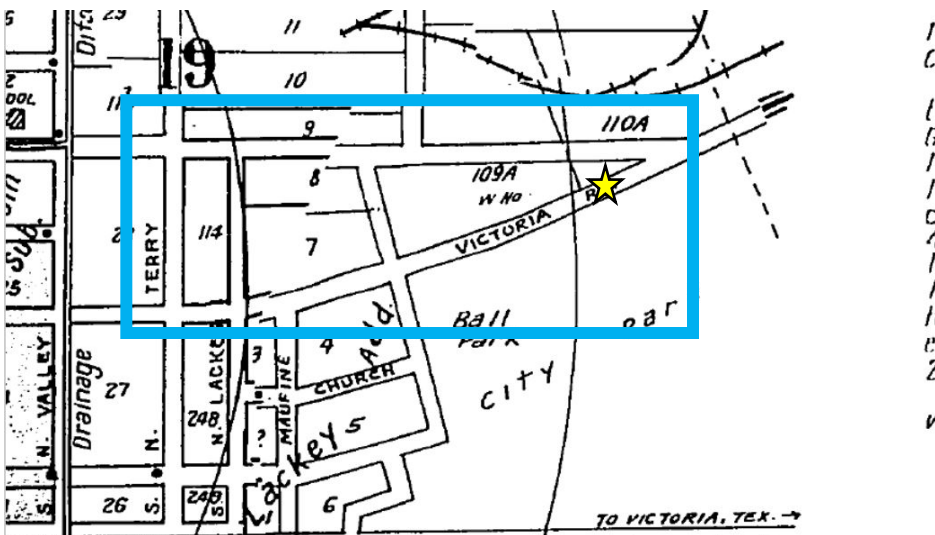
Figure 1: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922. The map illustrates (blue box) the street configuration in eastern Cuero before the construction of Highway 87 in 1931 that created the triangular parcel where the nominated monument was placed.

Source: University of Texas at Austin, Perry Castaneda Library



Figure 2: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1950. The later map of the same area shows the 1931 highway junction (within the blue box) that created the triangular parcel where the nominated monument (star) is located.

Source: University of Texas at Austin, Perry Castaneda Library





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Figure 3: Looking west towards Cuero from the junction of the “old and new Victoria Highway” (now E. Courthouse Rd. and Interstate 87) after the Texas Highway Department landscaped the roadside park. The red arrow indicates the DeWitt County Monument.

Source: Texas Department of Transportation, “Roadside Park in DeWitt County,” Texas Highway Department, 1937.



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Figure 4: Looking southeast at the DeWitt County roadside park showing NYA-constructed retaining walls and fountain. Both features are currently intact, although Cueroans transformed the fountain into a statuary base circa 2010. The DeWitt Monument is in the background, indicated by the red arrow.

Source: Texas Department of Transportation, "Roadside Park in DeWitt County," 1937.



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Figure 5: DeWitt County inscription.

DE WITT COUNTY  
INCLUDED IN THE COLONIAL GRANT IN 1825 TO GREEN DE WITT,  
TEXAS EMPRESARIO \* SETTLED UNTIL 1840 LARGELY BY ANGLO-  
AMERICANS \* \* \* CREATED A COUNTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS  
MARCH 24, 1846. ITS AREA BEING TAKEN FROM GONZALES  
VICTORIA & GOLIAD COUNTIES \* ORGANIZED JULY 13, 1846, WITH  
CAMERON AS THE COUNTY SEAT \* \* \* NAMED IN HONOR OF ITS  
ORIGINAL GRANTEE GREEN DE WITT 1787-1877 \* \* \* \* \* BY 1860  
HALF ITS POPULATION WAS OF GERMAN BIRTH \* \* \* \* CLINTON  
SERVED AS COUNTY SEAT , 1849-1876\* \* \* \* \* CUERO, INCORPO-  
RATED APRIL 23, 1873. WAS MADE COUNTY SEAT IN 1876\* \* \* \*  
IN MEMORY OF ARTHUR BURNS, FIRST SETTLER IN DE WITT COUNTY,  
1826 \* COLUMBUS BURNS, FIRST ANGLO-AMERICAN CHILD BORN IN  
THE COUNTY, 1829 \* GEORGE WASHINGTON DAVIS, DELEGATE TO THE  
SECOND CONVENTION OF TEXAS, 1833 \* CAPTAIN JOHN YORK, CAPTAIN  
DAVID MURPHREE, JAMES M. BELL, ALBRECHT VON ROEDER, LOUIS  
VON ROEDER, SQUIRE BURNS, JOHN F. PETTUS, PARTICIPANTS IN  
THE CAPTURE OF SAN ANTONIO , 1835 \* THOMAS R. MILLER, WILLIAM  
DEARDUFF, MARTYRS OF THE ALAMO, 1836 \* J.L. ALLEN A MESSEN-  
GER FROM THE ALAMO, 1836 \* \* O.H. PERRY DAVIS OF FANNIN'S  
COMMAND WHO ESCAPED THE REFUGIO MASSACRE 1836 \* CAPTAIN  
DAVID MURPHREE, JOHN F. PETTUS, JAMES BELL, JOSEPH KENT  
BERRY DOOLITTLE, ALLEN CARUTHERS, ROBERT J. KLEBURG, JOHN MC  
CRABB, JAMES J. TUMLINSON, LOUIS VON ROEDER, HEROES OF SAN  
JACINTO \* \* CREED TAYLOR, SQUIRE BURNS, JOSIAH TAYLOR, CHAS.  
A. OGSBURY, GEORGE W. DAVIS, SOLDIERS IN THE TEXAS ARMY 1836  
JAMES NORMAN SMITH, FIRST SCHOOL TEACHER IN DE WITT COUNTY  
1840 \* CAPTAIN DANIEL B. FRIAR, MILES S. BENNET, JAMES J. TUMLINSON  
\* \* \* JOSIAH TAYLOR, CREED TAYLOR, PARTICIPANTS IN THE BATTLE OF SA-  
LADO CREEK, BEXAR COUNTY, 1842 \* GEORGE LORD, ALFRED A. ALLEE  
MEMBERS OF THE MIER EXPEDITION 1842 \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* AND ALL  
OTHER PIONEERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS WHO RESIDED IN  
DE WITT COUNTY PRIOR TO OR AFTER THE REVOLUTION.  
ERECTED BY THE STATE OF TEXAS 1936.

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DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

Figure 6: The *Cuero Record* estimated 25,000 to 40,000 Texans witnessed 6,000 turkeys toddle down Main Street at the 1936 Turkey Trot parade.

Source: Cuero Heritage Museum.



DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

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## Photographs

Photo 1: DeWitt County Monument—camera facing west, February 16, 2018.



Photo 2: DeWitt County Monument—camera facing west, February 16, 2018.



DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

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Photo 3: DeWitt County Monument bas-relief detail—camera facing west, February 16, 2018. The Raoul Josset-designed bas-relief depicts *empresario* Green DeWitt ushering Anglo colonists to the county.



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Photo 4: DeWitt County Monument plaque detail—camera facing west, February 16, 2018. The monument marker text outlines county history.



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DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

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Photo 5: DeWitt County Monument side elevation—camera facing south, February 16, 2018.





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DeWitt County Monument, Cuero, DeWitt County, Texas

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Photo 6: DeWitt County Monument back elevation—camera facing east, February 16, 2018. The monument was historically part of a landscape design plan implemented by the Texas Highway Department for roadside parks. Until 2012, a turnout between the highway junctions ran in front of the nominated property.



~end~