

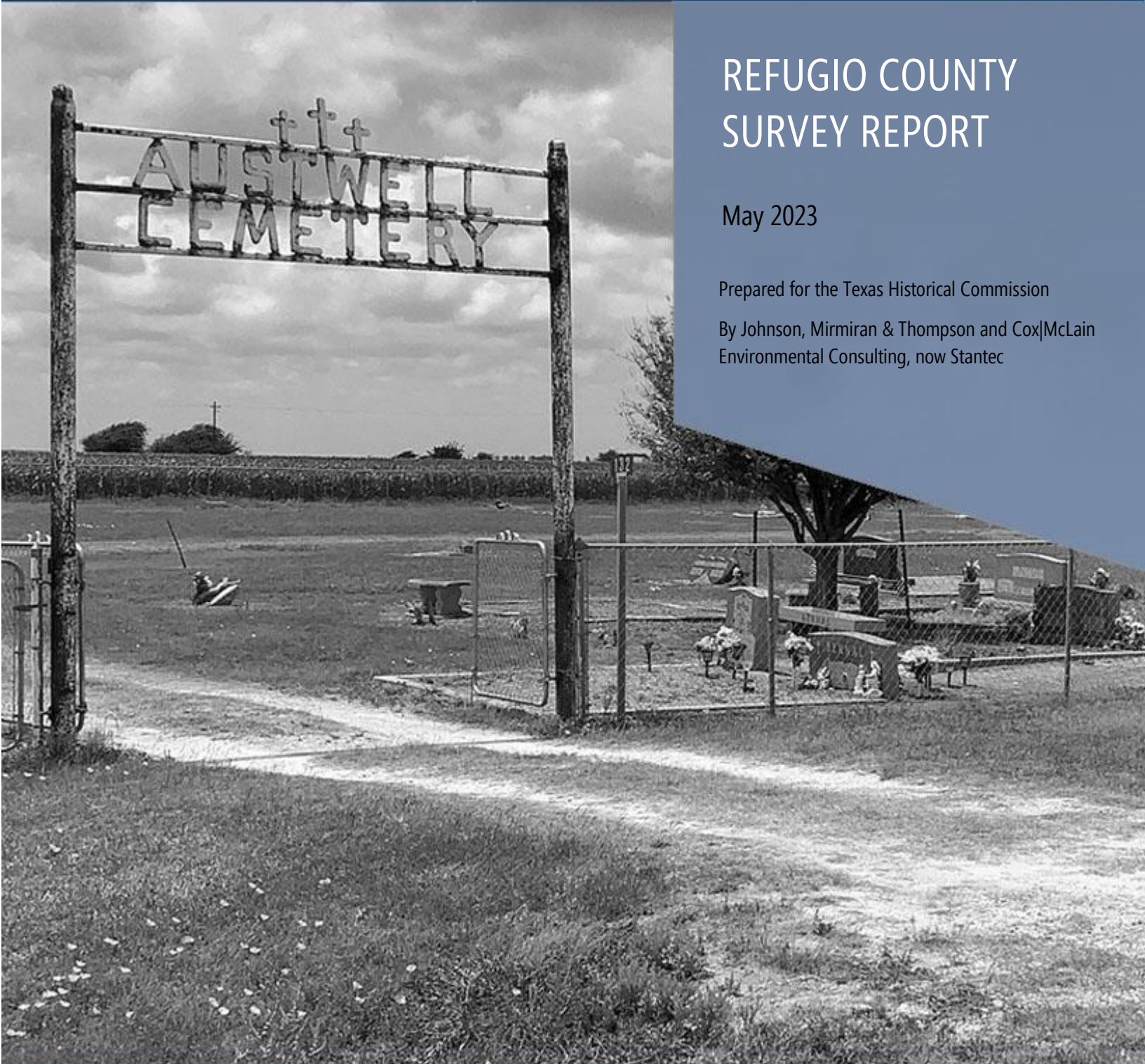
HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY OF ARANSAS, REFUGIO, AND CALHOUN COUNTIES

REFUGIO COUNTY SURVEY REPORT

May 2023

Prepared for the Texas Historical Commission

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Environmental Consulting, now Stantec



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Dennis M. O'Connor Public Library | JMT

This document presents the findings of a 2020–2022 historic resources survey of Refugio County, Texas. The Texas Historical Commission (THC), with a grant from the National Park Service’s (NPS) Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund to address the effects of Hurricane Harvey on historic properties, retained Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson (JMT) and Cox|McLain Environmental Consulting, Inc., now Stantec (Stantec), in November 2020 to conduct historic resources surveys of Aransas, Calhoun, and Refugio Counties. These counties were selected for study based on the lack of existing historic resource surveys, the likelihood of finding historic properties, and the threat of future hurricanes. The purpose of the project was to develop a historic context and identify historically significant properties and districts. JMT documented all buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts (broadly described as “resources”) within Refugio County built in 1973 or earlier (defined as “historic age”) and evaluated each for historic significance and integrity.

Fieldwork preparations involved the development of a fieldwork methodology, research design, public involvement plan, thematic historic context, geographic scope, and development of a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based data collection platform. A virtual public meeting was held on June 29, 2021, to introduce the project to interested parties and solicit information about historic resources. JMT conducted fieldwork in Refugio County between October 2021 and October 2022. Surveyors traveled every public road in Refugio County and surveyed resources from the public right-of-way.

In total, 1,648 historic-age resources were documented and evaluated for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). At a second (in-person) public meeting on October 11, 2022, preliminary results were presented to attendees and additional information about surveyed resources was solicited.

Of the 1,648 resources surveyed, four are NR listed and retain integrity to maintain their listing, 25 are individually eligible for listing in the NRHP, 10 are contributing to two eligible districts (five buildings each), and 1,603 are recommended not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Six of the resources surveyed were not visible from the ROW (See Table 2, Figure 1, Tables A-3 and A-4 in Appendix A, and the survey forms and maps in Appendices C and D).

Individual Resources Recommended Eligible for the NRHP:

- Barefield Learning Center | 612 East Commons Street, Refugio
- Ben Shelton Dry Goods | 710 Commerce Street, Refugio
- First National Bank | 733 Commerce Street, Refugio
- First State Bank | 320 1st Street, Woodsboro
- John S. Ragland House | 401 East Purisima Street, Refugio
- Memorial Hospital | 107 Swift Street, Refugio
- Mitchell-Simmons-Wales House "Aquana" | 904 Commerce Street, Refugio
- Mount Calvary Cemetery | Santiago Street, Refugio
- Oaklawn | 801 East Ymbacion Street, Refugio
- Old St. Mary's Cemetery | Bayside Cemetery Road, Bayside
- Power-Shay House | 102 East Empresario Street, Refugio
- Refugio City Hall | 609 Commerce Street, Refugio
- Refugio Public Library | 811 Commerce Street, Refugio
- Refugio Sheriff's Office/Lambert Plaza | 807 Osage Street, Refugio
- Refugio Tire Center | 602 South Alamo Street, Refugio
- Residence | Cemetery Road (Southeast of Austwell Cutoff Road), Austwell
- Residence | 1004 Commerce Street, Refugio
- Residence | 108 West Plasuela Street, Refugio
- Residence | 147 Austwell Road, Tivoli
- Lambert- Whitlow Home | 904 South Alamo Street, Refugio
- Strauch-Allison House | 103 East Plasuela Street, Refugio
- Vantage Bank | 111 East Plasuela Street, Refugio
- West-Linney House | 403 East North Street, Refugio
- Woodworth House "Ballygarrett" | 209 East Purisima Street, Refugio
- Refugio Community Cemetery | Common and Santiago Streets

District Recommended Eligible for the NRHP:

- Hotel Tivoli
- Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church

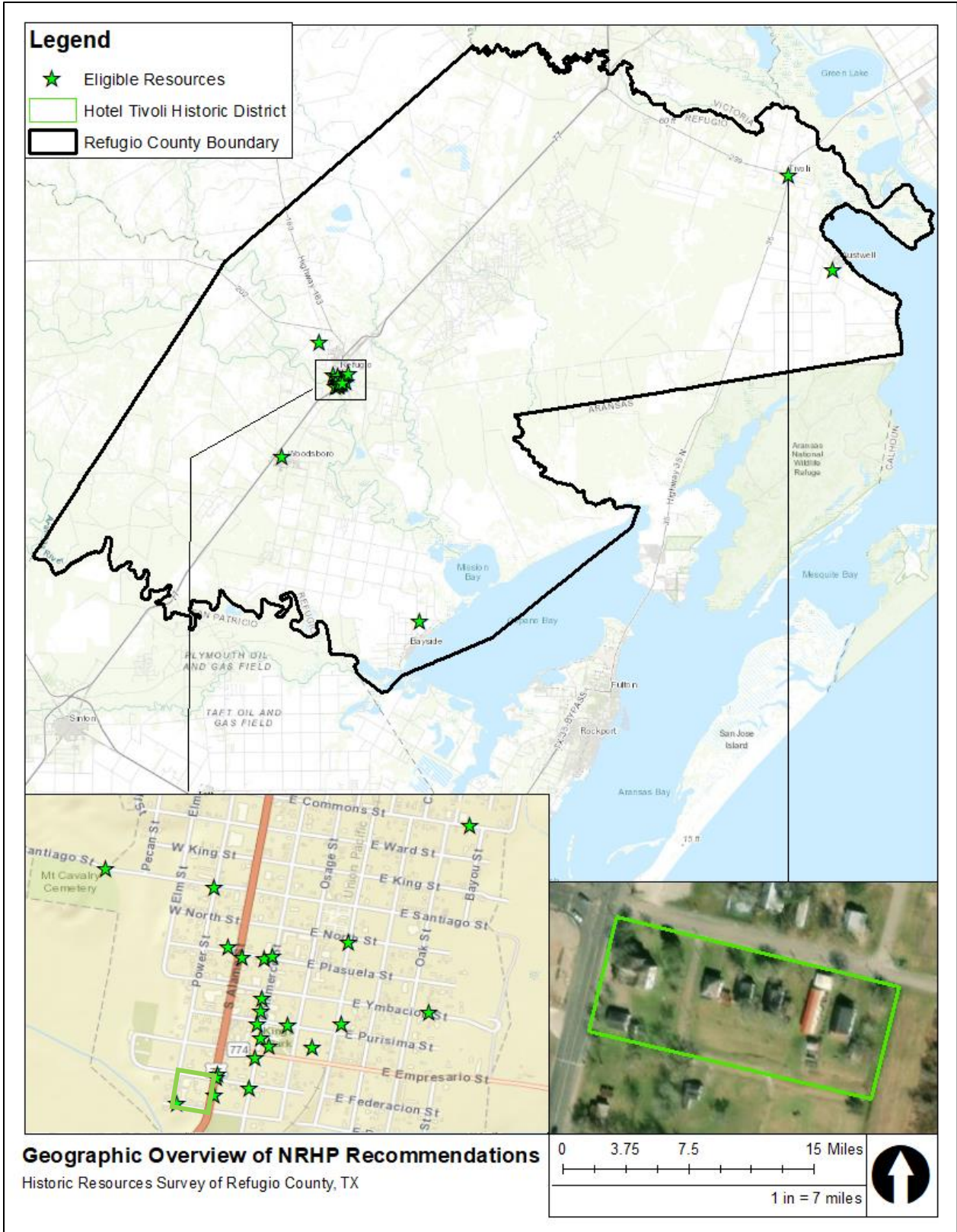


Figure 1. Geographic Overview of NRHP Recommendations.

Throughout the project, regular meetings were held with the project team and THC representatives, and all deliverables were reviewed by THC staff and revised based on their feedback.

This report begins with the project’s research design in Section 2. The public involvement plan and a summary of public engagement is provided in Section 3. Section 4 presents the fieldwork methodology. Section 5 introduces the historic context developed to evaluate the significance of documented resources. Survey results are provided in Section 6, and recommendations for future work are summarized in Section 7. Appendices include tables of historical markers in Refugio County, resources currently listed in the NRHP, and properties/district recommended eligible for the NRHP (Appendix A); survey forms for properties listed in the NRHP (Appendix B); survey forms for properties recommended eligible for the NRHP (Appendix C); maps and survey forms for the district recommended eligible for the NRHP (Appendix D); and survey forms for properties recommended not eligible for the NRHP (Appendix E). Digital files, including a GIS geodatabase and survey photographs, were provided with the final report.

REPORT TERMINOLOGY

Terminology in this report is based on standards set by the NPS. More details can be found in “National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation” (NPS 2002). This survey documents “resources,” which can be buildings, structures, objects, sites, or districts, as defined by the NPS.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN



Strauch/Alison House | JMT

PROJECT INFORMATION

HISTORIC-AGE SURVEY CUT-OFF DATE

The survey recorded historic-age resources, which are defined as any building, structure, object, site, or district that is 45 years of age or more at the time of the historic resources survey. According to this definition, resources constructed in 1973 or earlier were documented.

PROJECT SETTING/STUDY AREA

CURRENT LAND USE

Refugio County is on the Texas Gulf Coast, which comprises the far western portion of the Gulf of Mexico. It is bordered by Aransas, Bee, Calhoun, Goliad, San Patricio, and Victoria Counties. The county seat and largest town is Refugio; other towns in the county include Woodsboro, Tivoli, Bayside, Austwell, and Bonnie View. As of 2020, Refugio County had a population of 6,741 (U.S. Census Bureau 2020). Refugio and Woodsboro are the county's largest towns with populations of 2,709 and 1,326 respectively; both cities are along US Highway 77 and the Union Pacific Railway, which cuts through the center of the county from the southwest to the northeast (Texas Almanac 2020). Waterfront areas include land along the Copano, Hynes, Mission, and San Antonio Bays.

Land in Refugio County includes a mix of wildlife managerial, agricultural, industrial, residential, and commercial uses. There is one wildlife management area (WMA) in the county, the Guadalupe Delta WMA. A small portion of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge is in Refugio County along the Aransas County line (Texas Almanac 2020). The county has a high concentration of rural agricultural parcels throughout. Oil pads are most common on inland rural agricultural parcels, particularly in the central and southwestern portions of the county. The Hilcorp Energy Company and T-C Oil Company produce the largest share of oil and gas in the county, with several smaller companies contributing to production. Residential development is concentrated near town centers, with rural residences scattered throughout the county. Development along Hynes and San Antonio Bays is concentrated in Austwell, and development along Copano Bay stretches along the coast at Bayside (Google Earth 2016).

HISTORIC LAND USE

Historic land use in Refugio County has been primarily focused on ranching, and to a lesser extent, agricultural production. Urbanized areas include Refugio, Woodsboro, Bayside, Austwell, and Tivoli. Additional road-oriented development has occurred along major arteries since the late 1920s and early 1930s. Oil and gas extraction sites were added to inland areas beginning in the late 1920s.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Refugio County is divided into two ecoregions. The eastern half is in the Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes ecoregion, with barrier islands along the coast; salt grass marshes around bays and estuaries; tallgrass prairies, oak parklands and mottes along the coast; and woodlands in the river bottomlands. The western half is in the South Texas Plains ecoregion, with plains of thorny shrubs and trees and patches of palms and subtropical woodlands (Texas Parks and Wildlife 2020). The altitude of the county ranges from sea level to 100 feet above in the northwestern part of the county. The land is generally flat with poor to moderately well-drained soil, consisting of sandy loam along the coast and waxy soils in the upper portion of the county (Leffler 2020).

The county has a humid subtropical climate with an average of 37 inches of annual rainfall and a 309-day growing season. The Aransas River, which forms the county's southern border, the Guadalupe and San Antonio Rivers, which form the county's northern border, the Mission River, and several creeks drain the land (Leffler 2020). Bodies of water include several small, dispersed lakes. Bays include the Copano, Hynes, Mission, and San Antonio Bays (Texas Almanac 2020).

Local floras include tall prairie grasses, mesquite, live oak, prickly pear, and huisache. Faunas include deer, javelina, bobcat, quail, muskrat, beaver, mink, ring-tailed cat, badger, fox, turkey, duck, geese, jacksnipe, sandhill crane, and the endangered whooping crane, which nests in the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (Leffler 2020).

DESIGNATED HISTORIC PROPERTIES AND PREVIOUSLY EVALUATED RESOURCES

The survey project team reviewed the following sources to identify designated historic properties and previously evaluated resources in Refugio County.

- The THC Atlas map showing National Historic Landmarks (NHL), NRHP properties, Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks (RTHL), State Antiquities Landmarks (SAL), subject markers, Texas Centennial Markers, and previously surveyed resources
- Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) GIS data entitled "Historic Districts and Properties of Texas" and "NRHP-Listed and -Eligible Bridges of Texas"
- Texas Department of Agriculture Family Land Heritage (FLH) Program properties
- Texas Freedom Colonies Project Atlas
- Known named highways from the THC's Historic Texas Highway program and Hardy Heck Moore's 2014 Statewide Historic Context for Historic Texas Highways
- Local municipality and county websites
- NRHP Determination of Eligibility (DOE) properties and districts from THC records

PREVIOUSLY DESIGNATED HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Four NRHP properties, four RTHLs, 29 THC subject markers, and fifteen Texas Family Land Heritage Program properties are in Refugio County. No NHL or SAL properties are in the county.

NRHP Properties

NRHP properties include the John Howland Wood House in Bayside, two monuments in Refugio, and the county courthouse. The John Howland Wood House is a Greek Revival–style residence with Italianate detailing overlooking Copano Bay. Contractors Viggo Kohler and Hugo Heldefels built the dwelling in about 1875 for an influential Bayside family. The building was listed in the NRHP in 1983 at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

The State commissioned two monuments in Refugio for the 1936 Texas Centennial that were listed in the NRHP. Master sculptor Raoul Josset designed both. The Amon B. King's Men Monument is a statuary figure symbolizing the execution of King's Texas Army auxiliary forces after the Battle of Refugio during the 1836 Texas Revolution. The Mission Nuestra Señora del Refugio Monument is a historical marker for the Spanish-era mission that once stood in Refugio. Both monuments were listed in the NRHP in 2018 under the THC's "Monuments and Builders of the Texas Centennial" Multiple Property Form at the state level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Social History and under Criterion C in the area of Art.

The Refugio County Courthouse was listed in the NRHP in 2002 at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government. The property comprises the courthouse building, constructed in 1917 and redesigned 1950–1951, and two contributing objects: a 1936 historical marker commemorating Refugio County and a flagpole.

RTHLs

RTHL properties in Refugio County include the NRHP-listed John Howland Wood House, Refugio City Hall, the T-C Ranch House, and the Woodworth House. The Refugio City Hall is a Spanish Colonial Revival–style building designed by Irving H. Dunbar and built with financial assistance from the federal Public Works Administration. It was completed in 1936. The T-C Ranch House was constructed in 1874 for Thomas O’Connor and Mary Fagan on their vast property used for ranching and petroleum. The Woodworth House was built in Refugio in the first decade of the twentieth century for newspaperman L. H. Woodworth and his family. Julius Carl “Jules” Leffland designed the eclectic house with a galleried façade, Victorian-style embellishments, and a central octagonal bay tower.

THC Subject Markers and Centennial Markers

The THC subject markers in Refugio County relate to various topics including cemeteries, churches, cities and towns, pioneers, notable people, colonization, European immigration, the Texas Revolution, the Republic of Texas, ranching and cowboys, military, education, residential buildings, women, and ethnic heritage (Appendix A, Table A-1). Eight markers are 1936 Texas Centennial Markers, a type the THC generally considers to be eligible for the NRHP. Twelve markers that appear to have associated extant historic-age resources are noted in Appendix A. The associated resources are houses, cemeteries, city or county buildings, the Woodsboro town square, and a Rosenwald School building.

Table 1. THC Markers.

Marker #	Atlas #	Title	Location Information	City	Year
6570	5469006570	Peter Teal	Nicholas Fagan Memorial Cemetery, 6 mi. NW of Tivoli, N of SH 239 on private property.	Tivoli	1936
152	5391000152	King, Amon B.	Kings Park, Osage and Purisima St.	Refugio	1936
955	5391000955	Hobby, Colonel A.M.; Hobby’s 8th Texas Infantry Regiment, C.S.A.	Commerce & Empresario	Refugio	1963
2652	5391002652	Irish Immigrants in Refugio	Corner of Purisima and Osage Streets, King’s Park	Refugio	1994
2951	5391002951	King’s Men Monument	Mt. Calvary Cemetery on W Santiago St.	Refugio	1936
3592	5391003592	Nicholas Fagan	Nicholas Fagan Memorial Cemetery, 6 mi. NW of Tivoli, N of SH 239 on private property.	Tivoli	1956
3803	5391003803	Old St. Mary’s Cemetery	Cemetery Drive	Bayside	1983
3886	5391003886	Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church	1008 S Alamo St.	Refugio	1994
3995	5391003995	The Peter Henry Fagan House	About 6.5 mi. NW of Tivoli, N of SH 239 on private property.	Tivoli	1976
4120	5391004120	Austin, Preston Rose	Corner of FM 239 and Proctor Street	Austwell	1976
4231	5391004231	Refugio City Hall	613 Commerce St.	Refugio	1990
4233	5391004233	Refugio County Courthouses	808 Commerce Street	Refugio	1994
4498	5391004498	Scull, Sally	Refugio County Courthouse	Refugio	1964
4937	5391004937	Copano, Site of the Town of	At Bayside public park, Copano Bay Street	Bayside	1936
5616	5391005616	Urrea Oaks	US 77 south near median park area.	Refugio	1973
5903	5391005903	Woodworth House	209 E. Purisima St.	Refugio	1976
5934	5391005934	Yucatan Soliders’ Burial Site	E. Roca St	Refugio	1973
6481	5391006481	Site of the Home of Captain Ira Westover	608 Commerce Street, Refugio	Refugio	1936

Marker #	Atlas #	Title	Location Information	City	Year
1482	5391001482	Empresario James Power	Courthouse grounds, Commerce & Empresario Sts.	Refugio	1976
4232	5391004232	Refugio County	Courthouse grounds, Commerce and Empresario Sts.,	Refugio	1936
3488	5391003488	Mount Calvary Cemetery	Mount Calvary Cemetery	Refugio	1990
12169	5391012169	Woodsboro Square	Second and Wood Avenue	Woodsboro	1998
6479	5391006479	T-C Ranch House	SH 239, W of US 77 on private property.	Tivoli	1972
6484	5391006484	John and Virginia Linney House	102 W. West St.	Refugio	1993
12168	5391012168	John Howland Wood and Nancy Clark Wood House	Copano Bay Blvd. at Wood Ave.	Bayside	1999
17651	5507017651	Birthplace of Clara Driscoll	First St. and St. Mary's St.	Bayside	2013
17647	5507017647	Barefield School	Northeast of Commons and Bayou Sts.	Refugio	2013
6483	5391006483	John White Bower	Bower Cemetery on private property	Viaduri	1936
2817	5391002817	Site of the Home of John White Bower	Private road off US 77 North, private property	Viaduri	1936

Texas Family Land Heritage Program Properties

The Texas Department of Agriculture’s Family Land Heritage Program honors families who have owned and continuously operated a farm or ranch for 100 years or more. Though this recognition is just honorary, it can be useful for identifying properties that may have potential for NRHP eligibility. Refugio County has 15 Texas Family Land Heritage Program properties that were established between 1834 and 1878 by Irish emigrants and migrants from other states. Nine of the properties are portions of a ranch established by Nicholas Fagan of Ireland. Cattle raising has been the principal product on these properties.

Table 2. Texas Family Land Heritage Program Properties in Refugio County

Name	Location	Year Settled	Year Designated	Notes
Joe Benson Farm and Ranch	22 miles east of Refugio on Farm-to-Market 774	1872	2003	Established by Black Joseph "Joe" Benson and family of South Carolina on 160 acres. Expanded in 1901 to include 340 more acres. Historical crops/livestock raised: Longhorn cattle, sheep, cotton, sorghum, hogs, pigeons, quarter horses and mustangs.
Bickford Ranch	4 miles northwest of Tivoli on the San Antonio River	1854	1975	Established by Pelatiah Bickford of Maine who raised cattle, mules, and horses and grew corn, cane, and cotton.
Broad Ax Ranch	6 miles west of Tivoli on State Highway 239	1834	1975/2003	Parts of a ranch established by Irish emigrant Nicholas Fagan who obtained 9,537 acres of land in 1834 with a land grant from Mexico. Land historically used for cattle, horses, mules, corn, cotton, and other agricultural products.
Fagan Ranch	10 miles west of Tivoli on State Highway 239	1834	1975	
Fred Fagan Ranch	6 miles west of Tivoli on State Highway 239	1834	1975	
S. L. Fagan Ranch	9 miles west of Tivoli on State Highway 239	1834	1975	
T. T. Fagan & Sons Ranch	6 miles west Tivoli on State Highway 239	1834	1975	
Rancho Solo	7 miles west of Tivoli on State Highway 239	1834	1975/2003	
7 H F Ranch	6 miles west of Tivoli on State Highway 239	1834	1975/2003	
Seven J Bar Ranch	10 miles west of Tivoli on State Highway 239	1834	1975	
T Five Ranch	7 miles west of Tivoli on State Highway 239	1834	1975	
Sugar Bowl Ranch	6 miles west of Tivoli on State Highway 239	1834	2004	
Clarkson Oaks Ranch	7 miles northwest of Refugio on U.S. Highway 77A	1878	1983	Established by B. F. West of Louisiana who acquired 15,000 acres in Refugio and Goliad Counties. West also served as mayor of Refugio. West and descendants raised cattle (Brahman and crossbred).
Forks Ranch	At Blanco/Medio Creek fork	1869	1980	Established by Lieuen Morgan Rogers of Alabama. Chief product has been cattle. Rogers served as Refugio mayor, Refugio County judge, and a state representative.
J. D. McGuill Ranch	10 miles northwest of Refugio	1834	1976	Founded by William McGuill of Ireland, who raised cattle, food, and feed grains on 2,220 acres.

PREVIOUSLY DESIGNATED HISTORIC DISTRICTS

No NRHP districts are in Refugio County.

PREVIOUSLY EVALUATED RESOURCES

Aside from designated properties (discussed below), 10 resources in Refugio County have been previously determined individually eligible for the NRHP (Table 3). Nine of the resources are in the City of Refugio and one is in Woodsboro. Each was determined eligible under Criterion C, with the exception of one property, which was determined eligible under Criteria A and C. They include a 1947 bridge, five houses constructed between 1890 and 1910, a 1901 church, a 1949 church, a 1940 hospital, and a c. 1965 gas station.

Table 3. Resources Previously Determined Eligible for the NRHP

Name	Address	City	Date Built	NRHP Criteria	Area of Significance	Notes
Our Lady of Refuge Church	1008 S. Alamo Street	Refugio	1901	C	Architecture	Spanish Colonial Revival & Post-War
The Power-Shay House	102 E. Empresario Street	Refugio	1890	C	Architecture	Constructed by Viggio Kohler
Strauch-Williams House	103 E. Plasuela Street	Refugio	1910	A, C	History; Architecture	Colonial Revival style
Refugio Memorial Hospital	107 Swift Street	Refugio	1940	C	Architecture	Art Deco style
West-Linney House	403 E. North Street	Refugio	1910	C	Architecture	Classical Revival style
Phillips 66 Gas Station	612 S. Alamo Street	Refugio	c. 1965	C	Architecture	Post-war Modern style; Phillips 66 “batwing” design
Mitchell-Simmons-Wales House “Aquanna”	904 Commerce Street	Refugio	1907	C	Architecture	Constructed ca. 1902
Lambert-Whitlow House	904 S. Alamo Street	Refugio	1905	C	Architecture	Queen Anne style
St. Therese Little Flower Church	315 Pugh Street	Woodsboro	1949	C	Architecture	Designed by Leo M. J. Dielmann
State Highway 202 bridge over Blanco Creek (NBI 161960044704029)	3.2 miles west of U.S. Highway 183	Refugio	1947	C	Engineering	Cantilevered steel I-beam with suspended span; uncommon type from 1945–1965 period

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

The JMT/Stantec team conducted a preliminary desktop investigation of Refugio County to develop a profile of current land use and the natural environment, previously designated historic properties and evaluated resources, and prevailing aspects of history, geography, and culture that shaped Refugio County's built environment. The following resources were consulted:

- Texas Historic Sites Atlas and previous THC projects and programs (THC)
- Historic Districts and Properties of Texas, NRHP-Listed and -Eligible Bridges of Texas (TxDOT)
- The Family Land Heritage Program (Texas Department of Agriculture)
- Freedom Colonies Atlas (The Texas Freedom Colonies Project and Study)
- Articles from the Handbook of Texas Online
- Entries in the Texas Almanac
- Federal decennial population data (U.S. Census Bureau)
- Texas Ecoregions (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department)
- Agricultural census (U.S. Department of Agriculture)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Additional sources were reviewed as part of the ongoing research effort. Historic contexts were developed following research, in conjunction with field investigations and development of the historic resources survey report. The types of resources utilized for developing the historic context included:

- Maps and aerial images that illustrate historical development:
 - Texas State Highway Department General Highway Maps
 - Refugio County
 - Details of cities and towns in the county
- Texas General Land Office maps
- Sanborn Map Company fire insurance maps of Refugio
- U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps of the county and major communities
- Aerial imagery
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture (from the Texas Natural Resources Information System [TNRIS])
 - U.S. Geological Survey
 - Nationwide Environmental Title Research Online
 - Texas General Land Office (GLO)
- Current NRHP nominations and DOEs
- Previous historical studies of the region, such as:
 - Hardy Heck Moore's *Statewide Historic Context for Historic Texas Highways*, prepared for THC and TxDOT in 2014

- The TxDOT, Environmental Affairs Division, Cultural Resources Management Historical Studies Branch report series, including:
 - *A Field Guide to Industrial Properties in Texas*
 - *A Field Guide to Gas Stations in Texas*
 - *Agricultural Theme Study for Central Texas*
 - *Historical Agricultural Processing Facilities in Texas: An Annotated Guide to Selected Studies*
 - *Historic-Age Motels in Texas from the 1950s to the 1970s: An Annotated Guide to Selected Studies*
 - *South Texas Ranching*
- Texas State Parks and Wildlife studies
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service studies
- Federal decennial census aggregate and manuscript schedules for population, agriculture, manufacturing, and industry from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture Historical Archive
- Special collections and archives at the following facilities:
 - Refugio County Museum
 - Victoria Regional History Center at the University of Houston, Victoria
 - Museum of South Texas History at Texas A&M University, Kingsville
 - Mary and Jeff Bell Library at Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi
 - Palo Alto Research Center at the University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley
 - Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas, Austin, including vertical files and photographs
 - Texas State Library and Archives Commission
 - University of North Texas Libraries, including The Portal to Texas History
- Historical and regional journals, including:
 - *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*
 - *The Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record*
 - *The Journal of South Texas*
- Newspaper archives, including:
 - *Refugio County Press*
 - *The Refugio News*
 - *Refugio Timely Remarks* (available at The Portal to Texas History)
 - *The Refugio Review* (available at The Portal to Texas History)
 - *The Refugio County Record* (available at The Portal to Texas History)
 - *The Woodsboro News* (available at The Portal to Texas History)
 - *Austwell Dispatch* (available at The Portal to Texas History)
 - *Beeville Bee-Picayune*
 - *The Victoria Advocate*
 - *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*
- Local history collections available from public libraries

- Select secondary sources, such as books, articles, blog posts, and cultural resources management reports

ANTICIPATED THEMES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To develop the historic context, the project team utilized research questions related to the anticipated themes and subthemes of Refugio County's history. If research or public involvement revealed additional pertinent themes or subthemes, these topics were also developed and included in the historic context. The contexts were developed for the purposes of evaluating the significance of surveyed resources. As noted in the Fieldwork Methodology (Section 4), certain classes of resources would only be documented under certain conditions, and the extent of documentation may be limited. Therefore, associated contexts were abbreviated accordingly. For example, as bridges and other transportation resources were not documented unless they were important features of a potential historic district, the Transportation context statement was used to establish broad trends related to development patterns and may be shorter than others.

ARCHITECTURE

- What were early buildings like in Refugio County, and what building traditions did they reflect?
- How did the evolution of architecture in Refugio County mirror or deviate from national trends?
- What major eras of architecture, architectural styles and forms, and vernacular trends are common? What are the characteristics of those styles?
- How were local adaptations of common architectural styles executed?
- Who were the major builders and contractors?
- Were any architects particularly active?
- What are the architectural trends for agricultural buildings and structures? Do these resources reflect local or ethnic building traditions? How do agricultural resources reflect the evolution of agriculture in the county and the types and quantities of agricultural products raised?
- How were buildings built or modified in response to the local climate?
- Have there been periods of exterior renovation/repair after major hurricanes?
- If widespread hurricane damage reduced historical building stock or resulted in major changes to buildings, what, if any, integrity considerations should be applied for eligibility under Criterion C?

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- What were the historical demographics for Refugio County and its communities, and which of these trends influenced development?
- Where were early settlements and how did they evolve? Where and what permanent settlements developed?
- How did land grant distribution evolve?
- How did slavery evolve in Refugio County's communities?
- How did railroads influence the location and success of settlements?
- How did maritime access influence the location and long-term success of settlements?
- What land-use patterns are common or atypical in Refugio County's extant communities?

- What historical planning trends occurred in the development of these communities (e.g., planning models influenced by zoning, public health and housing, landscape design, urban renewal, severe weather, etc.)?
- Where and how has suburbanization developed?
- Are there any resort areas and did they evolve as master planned communities, or did they grow organically?
- How have wildlife management areas restricted growth and/or attracted development?

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture

- What types and quantities of agricultural products were raised and for what purpose?
- What quantities of land did agriculturalists devote to various uses (e.g., improved, unimproved, woodlands, aquaculture, irrigation, orchards, gardens)?
- What labor sources did agriculturalists rely on?
- What technological shifts occurred in agricultural practices and production?
- How did Refugio County's several large ranches develop and evolve?
- How did twentieth-century federal programs change agricultural production?
- How did levee systems benefit agriculturalists?
- What types of and how did agribusiness evolve?

Commerce

- Where did commercial centers develop and why those locations?
- How did rail transportation networks influence types and locations of commercial centers?
- How did the automobile influence business types and locations?
- What were the major businesses and who were the leaders in commerce?
- What common businesses were associated with commercial centers?
- What industries did commercial businesses serve?

Industry

- How and where did industrial sectors evolve in Refugio County? This is expected to include, but not be limited to:
 - Petroleum and natural gas
 - Extraction from Refugio County's numerous oil fields
 - Processing, transport, and related manufacturing
 - Agricultural processing, especially grain and cotton
 - Electric, water, and telephone utilities

ETHNIC HISTORY

- What demographic trends, leaders, and important periods/events are tied to ethnic history? This will include, but not be limited to:
 - European heritage
 - Latino heritage

- Black heritage
 - How did slavery evolve in Refugio County's communities?
- How have these groups shaped the culture, economy, built environment, civic, and political life?
- What important commercial, social, cultural, religious, and educational institutions have associations with major ethnic groups?

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Educational Development

- How did primary and secondary education develop in Refugio County?
- What are the major public and private educational institutions?
- What schools (e.g., Rosenwald Schools) served Black and Hispanic students during the Jim Crow Era?
- When and how did school integration take place?

Government

- When/how was the county formed?
- What were the historical government centers?
- When was the current county seat selected and how has it evolved?
- What are the major government administration buildings?
- When and how did major public/private infrastructure and service resources develop, such as post offices, libraries, fire stations, police stations, hospitals, eleemosynary institutions, and drainage and groundwater conservation and improvement districts?
- What twentieth-century federal public works projects were in Refugio County (e.g., Refugio Hospital, Refugio City Hall, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, monuments)?

Conservation

- Where did historic-age conservation areas develop and what was the catalyst for conservation in the county?
This will include, but not be limited to:
 - Aransas National Wildlife Refuge
 - What Civilian Conservation Corps resources are extant at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge?
 - Guadalupe Delta WMA
- How has the development of conservation areas influenced the built environment within and near these areas?

Recreation, Culture, and Leisure

- How did tourism opportunities on the coast influence the built environment?
- What theaters are extant?
- Did communities commemorate events/places/people with monuments and/or markers?
 - Were these markers part of larger commemorative campaigns (e.g., the 1936 Texas Centennial)?
 - Are these markers significant for design and/or association?
- What notable sculptures, statues, murals, or other works of art are visible from the public right of way?
- What resources associated with events like county fairs, livestock shows, annual festivals are extant?
- What dance halls are extant?

- What aspects of the built environment represent outdoor recreation, such as parks, marinas, and bird-viewing locations?
- Were water-adjacent communities, such as Bayside and Austwell, historically economically dependent on maritime tourism?

Transportation

- What were the significant modes of transportation? This will include, but not be limited to:
 - Water (Copano Bay and San Antonio Bay)
 - Railroads (St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railway, Missouri Pacific Railway)
 - Roads (including US Highway 77, and State Highways 202, 29, 113, and 35)
 - Air (Rooke Field and Mellon Ranch Airport)
- What significant transportation buildings and structures were constructed in Refugio County? This will include, but not be limited to:
 - Railroad facilities, including depots
 - Automobile-oriented commercial properties
- What historic-age major transportation resources, such as vehicular and railroad bridges, are extant?
- When the interstate system was constructed in mid-twentieth century, what impact did the absence of these federal highways in Refugio County have on its development?

3. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN



Refugio Police Station | JMT

This section summarizes the public engagement efforts undertaken in conjunction with the historic resource survey of Refugio County.

GOALS

The overarching goal of public involvement was to provide information about the project and solicit input from the public and key stakeholders. The JMT/Stantec team, on behalf of the THC, sought to achieve the following goals by providing opportunities for citizens, businesses, and organizations to participate in the survey process:

- Generate awareness of the project and communicate its purpose and goals.
- Establish public involvement opportunities.
- Provide county residents, property and business owners, elected officials, agencies, community groups, and other stakeholders with sufficient opportunity to contribute information for the project.
- Ensure that public engagements are held at convenient, accessible, and safe locations and scheduled during times that enable maximum involvement to the greatest extent possible.
- Identify and use innovative tools and strategies to share and present information and to empower public input about the project (e.g., website and social media).

- Proactively involve people and groups of people who are traditionally underrepresented in historic resource surveys by reaching out to targeted stakeholders. This included seeking out and considering the needs of people who are traditionally underrepresented: people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), low-income, or disabilities; minority households; and ethnic communities.

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

In addition to holding two public meetings, the following outreach tools and strategies were used to engage the public.

WEBSITE

THC provided project information and updates via their website.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The JMT/Stantec team worked with THC to develop messaging and posts for THC to share on their Twitter® and Facebook® accounts. Posted content included general project information, public meeting announcements, fieldwork updates, and project website links.

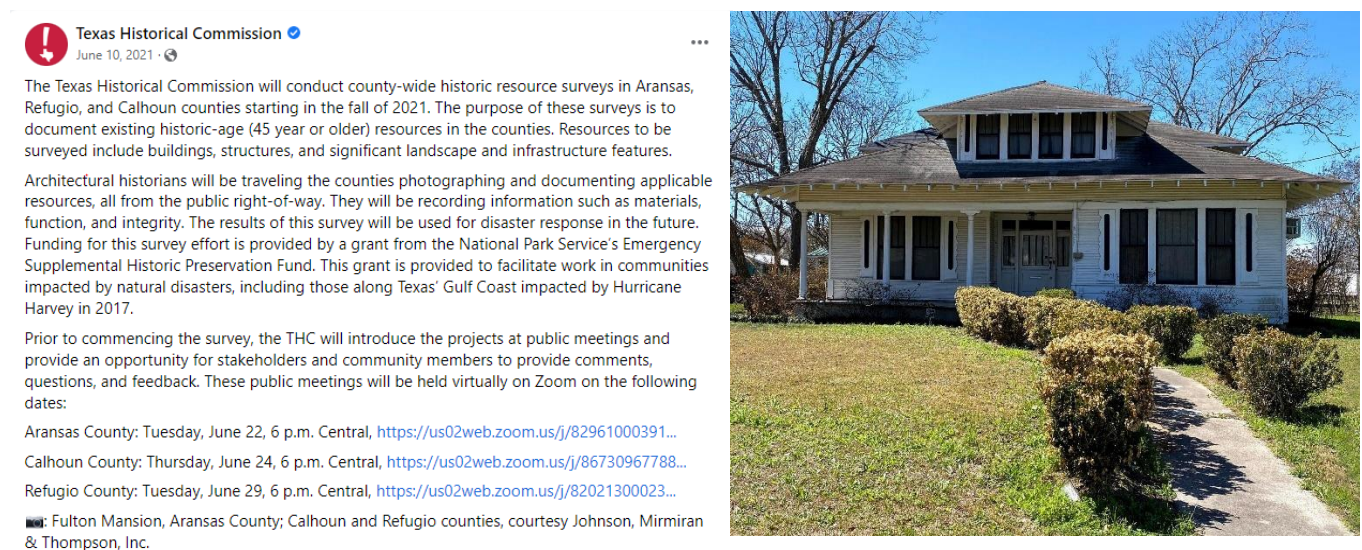


Figure 2. Example social media post from the project. Source: THC Facebook, June 10, 2021.

FLYERS

Project flyers were posted or distributed at public locations including libraries, post offices, government centers, and other high-traffic places in advance of both public meetings. The flyers described the project, ways to get involved, and who to contact for more information. During fieldwork, surveyors carried copies of the flyers to distribute to interested members of the public.

NEWSPAPER

JMT/Stantec placed public notices in the *Refugio County Press* on June 24, 2021, and October 6, 2022, prior to the scheduled public meetings.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

JMT/Stantec identified 10 potential stakeholder organizations in Refugio County (listed below). The THC reached out to each person or organization via email and/or letter to provide notice of the project and information about the survey. Recipients were also invited to attend the public meetings, share the information with interested parties, and provide feedback.

Refugio County Judge

Robert Blaschke
808 Commerce Street, Room 104
Refugio, TX 78377

Los Amigos de Nuestra Señora Del Refugio

c/o Jennifer Ragle
PO Box 129
Refugio, TX 78377-0129

Refugio County Historic Commission

Lori Bellows (Chair)
907 Swift Street
Refugio, TX 78377
361-526-2447
lorinaylorbellows@gmail.com

Ladies Guild of Bayside

c/o Karen Clark
PO Box 108
Bayside, TX 78340

Refugio County Museum and Historical Society

102 W. West Street
Refugio, TX 78377
361-526-2835

Texas Tropical Trail Region

PO Box 1538
Freer, TX 78357
361-547-8033

Dennis M. O'Connor Public Library

Tina McGuill (Director)
815 Commerce Street
Refugio, TX 78377
361-526-2608

Refugio County Chamber of Commerce

301 N. Alamo Street
Refugio, TX 78377

Bayside Historical Society

c/o Herndon Williams
PO Box 61
Bayside, TX 28340

Colonias de Bayside

PO Box 175
Bayside, TX 78340

PUBLIC MEETINGS

JMT/Stantec conducted two public meetings for Refugio County: one on June 29, 2021, prior to commencing the survey and one on October 11, 2022, after survey completion.

The purpose of the first meeting was to introduce the project to interested community members and stakeholders. The survey team explained the purpose and goals of the survey and presented the research design, fieldwork methodology, historic context, and geographic scope. Stakeholders and community members were invited to provide feedback and comments on the presentation materials and to identify properties with potential historic significance. Five people attended this June 29, 2021 meeting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting took place virtually utilizing the THC's Zoom account. The meeting consisted of an approximately 30-minute presentation by the JMT/Stantec team and covered the following topics:

- Introduction to the THC and to the project
- Introduction to the project team
- Purpose and goals of the project
- Overview of the work completed to date, including:
 - Research design
 - Draft fieldwork methodology
 - Historic context
 - Geographic scope
- Explanation of the fieldwork approach
- Overall project schedule
- Assistance in identifying resources significant to the public; described how to provide input and feedback, including visual resources such as photographs or scanned images.
- Discussion/Q&A

The second public meeting was held on October 11, 2022, at the Dennis M. O'Connor Public Library in Refugio. Twelve people attended. The purpose of this meeting was to present the preliminary survey results and NRHP recommendations. This meeting also provided a forum for community members and stakeholders to share feedback.

4. FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY



Strip mall in Refugio County | JMT

PRE-SURVEY INVESTIGATION

The JMT/Stantec team conducted a preliminary analysis of the number and general character of historic-age resources in Refugio County, informed by county appraisal district (CAD) data, historic aerial imagery, maps, and a windshield visit to canvas the county. The team's proposal for the project included documentation of up to 2,000 resources in Refugio County. As detailed in sections below, based on the preliminary information gathered on the nature and quantity of historic-age resources in the county and the flexibility of the multi-category approach using Survey123, the team estimated it would be able to comprehensively document pre-1974 resources in Refugio County. Therefore, rather than planning how to implement an initial, prioritized investigation under the terms of the contract and proposing a methodology for future work, the team used a desktop analysis and windshield visit to guide the field survey methodology.

DESKTOP ANALYSIS OF THE COUNTY AND GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

The team obtained Refugio CAD data in February 2021 and analyzed it to characterize development. As detailed in Table 4 below, approximately 6,700 parcels are in Refugio County.

Table 4. Preliminary CAD Analysis of Refugio County Parcels

Total parcels	6,695
Total parcels with improvements with a minimum year-built date of 1973 or earlier	1,917
Total parcels built in 1973 or earlier that are part of a 10+ property subdivision with a minimum year built of 1946 or later	258
Total parcels meeting individual survey criteria	1,755
Number of post-war subdivisions with 10 properties or more	13

The team explored methods for identifying “post-war residential neighborhoods,” which were defined in the Request for Qualifications as “neighborhoods developed after 1945 and containing ten (10) or more historic-age residential properties.” The team used CAD analysis to identify subdivisions that are historic-age (pre-1974) and have 10 or more parcels. Based on this criterion, no areas in Refugio met this definition.

WINDSHIELD SURVEY

During the week of March 8, 2021, two senior historians from the JMT/Stantec team canvassed the county, with the goal of exploring answers to the following questions:

- How accurate is the CAD data?
- How many potentially eligible properties are present (order of magnitude) and where are they?
- How many mobile home neighborhoods are present and where are they?
- How many resources will fall within “post-war subdivisions” and where are they?
- Have any additional trends emerged that should be reflected in the development of the historic context statements?
- Are any potential historic districts present?
- How are irrigation resources expressed in the county?
- Generally, how accessible/visible were properties from the public right-of-way?
- What factors should fieldworkers be aware of?

The two historians each drove portions of the county, focusing on populated areas. They used the ArcGIS Online (AGOL) map on iPads to identify potential districts and to make other notes, such as the potential for districts and any areas that would require special attention. It was at this time, the potential district in Tivoli was identified.

The key take-aways from the windshield visit to Refugio County are presented below.

- Few mobile home communities were observed; it was more common to see mobile homes intermixed with single-family houses.
- There were few apparent nineteenth-century resources.
- Few irrigation resources are evident.
- Current agricultural practices observed included cattle/goat grazing and horses and row crops focused on cotton, grain, sorghum. Most agricultural properties appeared to have little potential for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility due to a lack of historic-age building stock and integrity concerns.

- There was a potential for a district in the town of Refugio.
- There are very few publicly accessible streets throughout the county save for the small towns.

REVISED ANALYSIS OF CAD DATA, INFORMED BY THE WINDSHIELD SURVEY

Following the observations made in the field, the estimates of the properties to be surveyed were revised, as presented in Table 5 below. The windshield visit revealed several neighborhoods initially defined as post-war subdivisions instead had considerable numbers of pre-war resources. Thus, the definition was revised to count only those neighborhoods where there were one or fewer parcels with pre-1946 construction dates.

As a result of the windshield survey and research on specific properties as part of the historic context development, approximately 5 percent of historic-age parcels outside of post-war subdivisions may have potential to qualify as eligible for the NRHP. Given the character of the remaining historic-age properties observed, the percentage of building stock to be documented as not eligible was also estimated.

Table 5. Revised CAD Analysis of Refugio County Parcels

Total parcels	6,695
Total parcels with improvements with a minimum year-built date of 1973 or earlier	1,917
Total parcels built in 1973 or earlier that are part of a 10+ property subdivision with one or fewer properties built before 1946	317
Estimated number of pre-1974 resources without recorded CAD construction date and/or resources occurring on a parcel with more than one resource (5%)	96
Total parcels meeting individual survey criteria	1,696
Likely to be potentially eligible (5%)	189
Likely to be not eligible (95%)	3,595
Number of post-war subdivisions meeting representative documentation criteria	16

GEOGRAPHICAL PRIORITIZATION

The following order was identified for fieldwork:

1. Refugio
2. Woodsboro
3. Austwell
4. Tivoli
5. Bayside
6. Bonnie View

More urban areas were prioritized, due to their observed potential to have higher concentrations of potentially significant resources. Following the documentation in the urban areas, surveyors then documented the properties mapped as a historic district. Finally, surveyors then expanded into the rural areas of the county to document the remaining historic-

age resources in the county. The survey was limited to public roads and documentation was limited to properties visible from the public right-of-way.

SURVEYOR TEAMS

Following the pre-survey investigation, the JMT/Stantec team deployed survey teams comprising two surveyors (historians and/or architectural historians) per team. Each team was assigned survey locations based on the geographic prioritization strategy before heading out into the field. Each surveyor carried an iPad, GPS Navigation, a Wi-Fi hotspot, battery chargers, a point-and-shoot camera as backup in the event of technical failures, and copies of the project flyers to distribute to interested members of the community.

Refugio County was surveyed following the fieldwork methodology approved by the THC. Prior to fieldwork, all survey staff reviewed the documentation produced to date, including the draft historic contexts and the final fieldwork methodology to ensure the team was prepared to follow the procedures outlined in these documents. An internal meeting was held, attended by the JMT/Stantec team principal investigators and project managers, the primary authors of the historic context, the ArcGIS Survey123 data managers, and the staff assigned to fieldwork to ensure that the survey team understood the survey methodology and the historic themes and anticipated property types associated with each theme. The pre-fieldwork preparation included survey team training on the use of the Collector and Survey123 applications and back-up procedures. Questions that arose during training were addressed by the project manager.

All fieldwork staff were informed of both general and site-specific safety measures. In addition to typical fieldwork hazards such as traffic, ticks, and weather, surveyors were made aware of the potential for alligators and snakes in roadside drainage ditches.

All resources were surveyed from the public right-of-way, and no right-of-entry permissions were sought. Teams of two historians worked in proximity to one another to ensure consistency in data collection and complete geographic coverage of the county.

DATA COLLECTION

Surveyors used a combination of ESRI GIS Field Maps and ArcGIS Survey123 applications to record resources in the field. Field Maps was used to identify the subject parcel and open a survey form in ArcGIS Survey123 which would then be linked to the parcel via the parcel number. Survey123 is a form-centric application that allowed for full documentation of each resource including creating a GIS point and taking photographs. The data is reviewable and editable on a desktop browser and ArcGIS software. All captured GIS data is compatible with the NPS Cultural Resource Spatial Data Transfer Standards (issued January 2014).

Each parcel was pre-loaded with the Refugio County Assessor's data, including the address, parcel number, and earliest assessor construction date, which was always reviewed and confirmed or updated during fieldwork. The assessor data automatically populated into each documented resource's survey form.

Surveyors documented resources determined to have been constructed in or before the survey cut off date, 1973. Surveyors redocumented historic resources previously determined eligible for the NRHP by the THC to provide an updated record on integrity and current NRHP eligibility. The focus of this project was on above-ground resources that have potential architectural or historical significance; no archeological resources were documented.

Surveyors used Field Maps to track their progress, changing each parcel from “not completed” to “surveyed,” “modern/vacant,” “not accessible,” or “not visible” (Figure 3).¹ This data updated in real time, allowing teams of fieldworkers to work in the same geographic area simultaneously without duplicating efforts. Following the completion of fieldwork, GIS analysis was conducted to ensure that no unsurveyed parcels remained.

The Collector and Survey123 applications allowed real-time tracking of survey progress. Survey teams reported their progress to their firm’s project manager daily. The JMT/Stantec team provided regular updates to the THC project manager regarding the number of properties surveyed, including details about their location and survey category. Regular communication ensured that the THC was kept abreast of the pace of the survey and the ability to document the expected number of historic-age properties in the county.

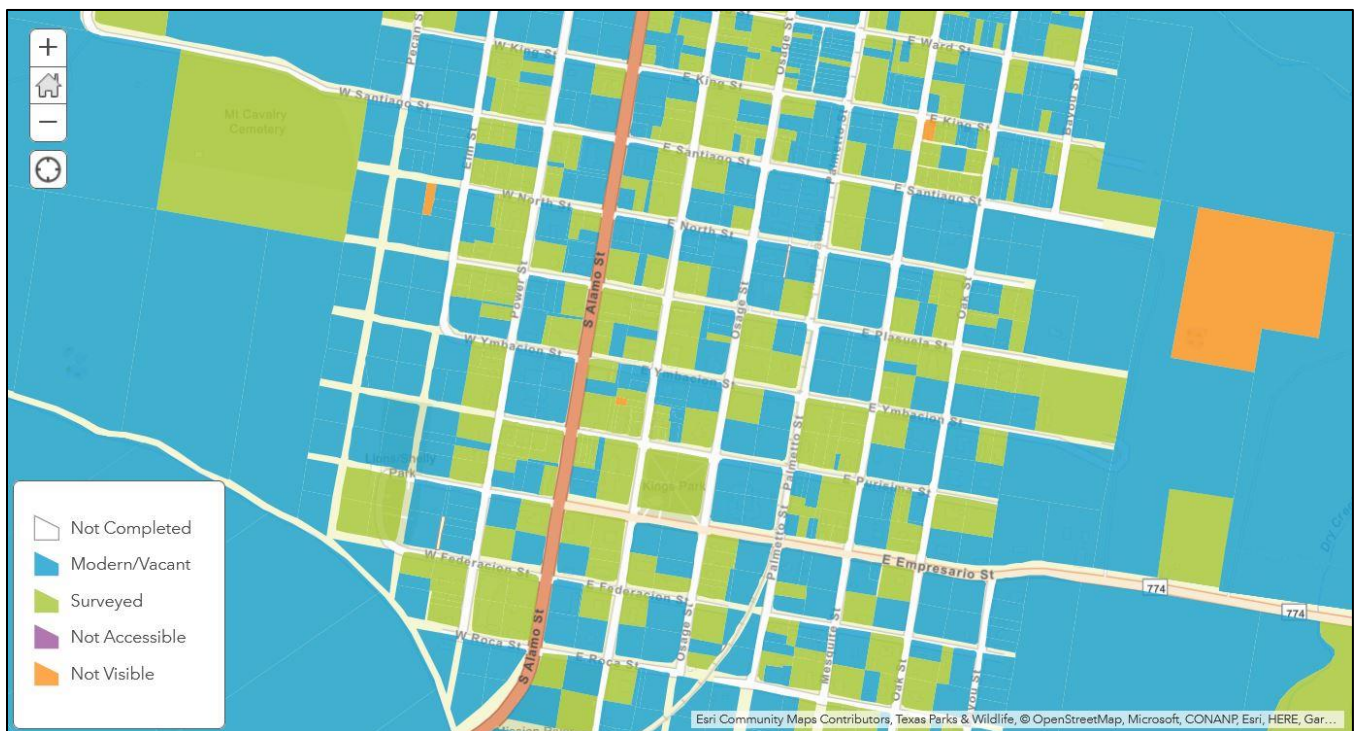


Figure 3. Screenshot of the ArcGIS-based Collector application that surveyors used to track fieldwork progress.

¹ “Modern” properties were defined as those for which all resources visible from the right-of-way were constructed in 1974 or later.

HISTORIC RESOURCE CATEGORIES

The information gathered on a historic-age resource was dependent on the property type and potential for NRHP eligibility. Each surveyed resource included the date of survey, surveyor name, photographs, and optional field notes. At least two photographs were required of each resource surveyed. As with the documentation, the photographs were taken only from the public right-of-way.

In some instances, CAD data did not have an address, tax parcel ID, or city for a parcel. When missing, address and city information was provided by the survey team for properties recommended eligible for the NRHP or contributing to a recommended NRHP district.

POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE AND CONTRIBUTING

Resources falling under this category were individual resources considered potentially eligible for the NRHP and resources that contribute to a potential historic district. These resources may be eligible under Criteria A or B for their ties to regionally important events, themes, or figures. They may also be eligible under Criterion C for their architectural significance within a regional context or under Criterion D for their non-archeological information potential. All potentially eligible resources must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance. The following data was collected to the extent possible for Potentially Eligible and Contributing resources:

County	Roof Materials	Significant Landscape Features
Address	Wall Materials	Associated Historical Context
City	Windows	Integrity
Tax Parcel ID	Door (Primary Entrance)	Recommendation
Construction Date	Plan	NRHP Criteria
Current Use	Chimneys	Designation
Historic Use	Primary Porch	External Notes
Surveyor	Number of Stories	Photos
Survey Date	Basement	Requires Additional Office Work
Stylistic Influence(s)	Additions/Modifications	
Roof Form	Ancillary Buildings	

NOT ELIGIBLE

Resources recorded as Not Eligible were properties that lack architectural significance and/or integrity including those that may be in an irreversible state of deterioration. These properties would not contribute to a potential historic district. Not Eligible properties do not carry associations with significant historic themes in Refugio County, have deteriorated, or have been altered to the point they no longer convey any such associations. The following data was collected for resources determined to be Not Eligible in the field:

County	Construction Date	Survey Date
Address	Current Use	External Notes (as applicable)
City	Historic Use	Photos
Tax Parcel ID	Surveyor	

NOT VISIBLE

A number of properties were not visible from the public right-of-way for a variety of reasons, including their distance from the public right-of-way, intervening buildings, or dense foliage. The following data points were collected for properties that were not visible:

County	Tax Parcel ID	External Notes (as applicable)
Address	Surveyor	Photos
City	Survey Date	

DISTRICTS AND OTHER GROUPINGS

Certain groupings of resources received a single entry in the Survey123 application with a description and overall photographs that provide an understanding of the character of the collection. Each contributing resource within a potentially eligible historic district was documented under the Potentially Eligible and Contributing category of resources (noncontributing resources were documented under the Not Eligible category). Post-war residential developments containing more than 10 post-war resources and mobile or manufactured home developments with 10 or more historic-age mobile and manufactured homes were documented with a single entry. Surveyors recorded the following information for potential or listed historic districts, post-war residential developments, and mobile or manufactured home developments:

County	Name	NRHP Criteria
City	Character	External Notes
Additional Location Information	Buildings Inventoried	Photos
Survey Date	Number of Resources	Requires Additional Office Work
Surveyor	Integrity	
Construction Date	Recommendation	

SITE, OBJECT, OR STRUCTURE

Surveyors recorded historic-age sites, objects, and structures during the survey. Such resources included monuments, statues, cemeteries, and linear man-made waterways, among other resource types. The following information was collected for sites, objects, or structures:

County	Surveyor	NRHP Criteria
City	Resource Name	Designation
Additional Location Information	Property Type	External Notes
Tax Parcel ID	Integrity	Photos
Survey Date	Recommendation	Requires Additional Office Work

RESOURCES OF SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

As directed by the THC, special considerations were taken with the following resource types:

- **Bridges**—Road and railroad bridges, overpasses, underpasses, and culverts were excluded from field investigation and documentation unless they were important features of a potential historic district as determined by the surveyors in the field.
- **Post-War Residential Neighborhoods**—Subdivisions with one or fewer parcels with post-1946 development and containing ten (10) or more historic-age residential properties were documented and evaluated collectively by providing a general description of the neighborhood’s history, design, setting, building forms, architectural styles, a map of the neighborhood boundary, and photographs of a representative sample of the historic-age properties. Important non-residential properties within the neighborhood, such as schools, churches, parks, or commercial buildings, were photographed and recorded as part of the representative sample. CAD data was used to preliminarily identify these areas prior to pre-survey investigation.
- **Mobile and Manufactured Homes**—Individual mobile and manufactured homes were excluded from field investigation and documentation unless they were part of a development with ten or more historic-age mobile or manufactured homes, in which case they were documented collectively.
- **Irrigation and Drainage Districts**—Historic-age irrigation, drainage, and other water improvement districts were to be documented as a single system by providing a general description of the system’s history and function, a map of the system showing major features, and photographs of a representative sample of the historic-age features. No irrigation or drainage districts were identified in Refugio County based on the pre-survey and survey fieldwork, TCEQ Water Districts Map Viewer, and research.
- **Linear Transportation Corridors**—Historic-age linear transportation corridors, including roads, highways, railroads, and former transportation rights-of-way, were excluded from field investigation and documentation unless they were important features of a potential historic district as determined by the surveyors in the field. No such resources were identified during fieldwork.
- **Linear Man-Made Waterways**—Historic-age linear man-made waterways such as the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and the Victoria Barge Canal were documented as a single resource.
- **Ancillary Resources**—Historic-age ancillary buildings visible from the right-of-way were documented and photographed with the associated primary building. Historic-age structures such as stylized signs were documented along with the associated building. Ancillary buildings without a primary building were surveyed as an individual resource.

POST-FIELD PROCESSING

Following fieldwork, the Survey123 data was reviewed to ensure that all required fields were provided for each documented resource. Senior members of JMT's team reviewed individual properties and the district identified during fieldwork as having potential for historic significance and conducted desktop research as needed to inform NRHP evaluations.

5. HISTORIC CONTEXT



Austwell Cemetery | JMT

This context is a tool to facilitate identification of resources in Refugio County and is not a comprehensive narrative of local history. This narrative includes information based on pertinent historical themes and subthemes and specific chronological periods for the geographic area defined as Refugio County, Texas. The historic context describes local historical patterns of architecture; economic development based on agriculture, commerce, maritime, and industry; ethnic heritage; public and private institutional development for education, government, conservation, military institutions and activities, recreation, culture, and leisure; and transportation. Each context theme or subtheme offers one or more periods and areas of significance appropriate to that topic and lists property types based on functions. The narratives focus on the extant buildings, structures, objects, and districts that represent these topics, and includes, to the degree necessary, relevant precursory details that galvanized the local built environment's evolution. With these component parts, this historic context provides a framework to guide field investigations and post-field analysis that will identify and evaluate historic-age resources for NRHP eligibility. Ultimately, this historic context will help guide future planning priorities, goals, and strategies for significant historic properties in Refugio County.

In this report, the historic context is the product of preliminary research, subtly transformed and refined, and post-survey research. The previously prepared research design presented a series of questions applicable to each anticipated theme and subtheme which shaped this historic context. However, the results of careful research demonstrated that certain paths of inquiry were immaterial and their pursuit deemed unwarranted. These instances are briefly explained within each topic where appropriate. Similarly, the March 2021 windshield survey of Refugio County supplied invaluable information that reshaped content to accommodate the findings. Surveyors were aware that severe weather events have caused substantial damage to local resources, and the windshield survey revealed unexpected proof of losses. In effect,

relatively few nineteenth- or early-twentieth-century resources remain extant in Refugio County; of the few that exist, most have been radically altered. Following completion of fieldwork, the historic context was updated to refine the narrative, periods and areas of significance, and related property types. To date, comments from reviewers have provided additional insights and direction for the following context.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Refugio County was first settled by Europeans during the Spanish colonial period and was organized, as one of thirteen original counties of the Republic of Texas, in 1837 (Long 2020a). Its original boundaries included present-day Goliad County until 1841; Calhoun, San Patricio, and Victoria Counties until 1846; parts of Bee county until 1857; parts of Aransas County until 1871, and parts of Nueces County until 1878 (Leffler 2020a). The county is currently bounded by the San Antonio River on the northeast, San Antonio Bay on the east, Mission Bay at the southeast, and the Aransas River at the south and southwest.

The Coastal Bend area was historically occupied by several groups of nomadic, hunter-gatherer peoples, including the Karankawas and Coahuiltecas. These groups disappeared from the area by the mid-1800s as a result of the arrival of Europeans, who brought disease and hardship to the native population (Long 2020a). Fish and oysters have been historically plentiful, in addition to game birds including ducks and geese which have been continuously used as a food source throughout the county's history. The Native Americans who historically resided in Refugio County utilized natural resources and migrated seasonally to harvest inland plants and fish and collect shellfish along shorelines (Texas Almanac 2020, 351. Kenmotsu 2009).

Europeans began settling the greater Coastal Bend area in the early eighteenth century. In the 1780s, the Spanish established a port of entry and customs house known as El Cópamo on the mainland shore of Copano Bay. The port served Goliad, Refugio, and San Antonio de Béxar, and though hundreds of colonists entered here, the vast majority moved inland rather than settling the coastal area. The Spanish established a mission in 1793 called Nuestra Señora del Refugio, located just north of the mouth of the Guadalupe River in present-day Refugio County, where it remained in some use until about 1830 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2013; Benowitz 2021b).

The Spanish established a fort on Live Oak Peninsula called Aránzazu, from which the word Aransas is derived. In the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, the fort guarded the entrance to Copano Bay (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2013). Although the Spanish made several attempts to establish settlements in the lower Nueces River valley, none of them were successful due to the remote location and threats of attacks by Native Americans (Long 2020a).

The land grant systems under Spanish and Mexican rule influenced early settlement of the area. In 1824, the Mexican government passed a national colonization law which granted states the authority to regulate the distribution of unappropriated lands for colonization (Barker 2020). It was under this law that the earliest land grants in Refugio County were granted. Irishmen James Power and James Hewetson received empresario grants encompassing the majority of the Refugio County area and including rights to the old mission and surrounding town (Leffler 2020a). Power and Hewetson intended to bring in Irish and Mexican settlers to the land. Some Irish families arrived and settled in the area between 1829 and 1833, but settlement remained sparse through the Texas Revolution (Long 2020a).

Anglo settlers joined existing Tejano ranchers and adopted some of their ranching techniques while bringing in new influence from their countries of origin. The county's economy has been historically centered on agriculture, with a particular focus on stock raising. The principal crops have historically been cotton and corn, but hay, potatoes, melons, and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables were produced in small quantities (Texas Almanac 2020, 351).

THEME: ARCHITECTURE

The historic context is a tool to facilitate identification and evaluation of extant resources in Refugio County and is not a comprehensive narrative of local architectural history. This section addresses how the history of the county influenced the construction and development of architectural resources including buildings and structures. Hurricanes and major storms destroyed much of the earliest-built wood-frame buildings and structures in the county, a building type that would have comprised much of the county's earliest architectural narrative. Thus, this context addresses major, local architectural trends based on extant resources. The styles and forms discussed are generally based on the THC's survey form list, Virginia Savage McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses*, and Richard Longstreth's *The Buildings of Main Street*, which historic preservation professionals recognize as industry standards for residential and commercial architecture, respectively.

Both residential and non-residential architecture in Refugio County followed national trends. Some residences (particularly those constructed for wealthy cattle ranchers and other prominent figures), municipal buildings, and churches were architect-designed and reflected high-style influence, but most commercial buildings and residences were modest. Later buildings were sometimes constructed of brick or concrete-block units to withstand storms and others were lifted to prevent damage from flooding.

RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE

Permanent dwellings of the pre-railroad era were constructed using local materials and reflected the folk building traditions of their inhabitants. In Refugio County, the European building traditions of early settlers likely influenced local construction; however, no such buildings are known to be extant. Once railroads arrived in communities, buildings and construction techniques changed dramatically since inexpensive materials, especially dimensional lumber, could be obtained from distant sawmills (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 135). In housing, six distinctive folk-inspired forms emerged: gable-front, gable-front-and-wing, hall-and-parlor, I-house, massed-plan, side-gable, and pyramidal. Collectively, these vernacular forms are referred to as National Folk houses. National Folk houses were common until c. 1930, but the trend may have persisted longer in rural places like Refugio County. Especially in rural areas, living conditions were typically primitive in the early twentieth century with no municipal water or wastewater systems. People used outdoor privies and had wood or metal cisterns to catch rainwater (Freier 1979, 68). Extant houses from this era were likely modernized with additions and other modifications to improve living conditions.

Houses constructed for middle- to upper-class residents in the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries were likely to be examples of the Victorian era of architecture. Victorian-era houses have more complex forms than their National Folk predecessors and have mass-produced decorative detailing and components that industrialization made possible. Pattern books were widely disseminated throughout this period, introducing local builders to the new styles and plans

of this era, including the Second Empire, Stick, Queen Anne, and Folk Victorian styles (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 312). Of these, the Queen Anne and Folk Victorian styles appear to have been the most common in Refugio County. In Texas, Victorian-influenced designs were constructed as late as the 1910s.



Figure 4: This undated mid-twentieth century photograph shows the Woodworth House "Ballygarrett." Constructed in the Victorian Queen Anne style, the house was remodeled ca. 1912 at the height of the popular Neo-Classical style of the Eclectic Movement (Texas Historical Commission n.d.; Historic American Buildings Survey n.d.).

The Eclectic era of residential architecture occurred in two waves between 1880 and 1940. During this era, residences emulated the historical styles of domestic buildings in Europe and early America, including traditionally Greek/Roman, English, French, Colonial Revival, and Mediterranean/Spanish Revival designs (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 406–7). The town of Refugio is distinguished by the presence of an unusual number of grand Colonial Revival style houses constructed around the turn of the twentieth century by the county's leading ranch families (Gerald Moorhead et al. 2018a).



Figure 5: Undated photograph of the c. 1872/1908 Ragland House, a single-story Greek Revival style cottage in Refugio (Texas Historical Commission Unknown; Gerald Moorhead et al. 2018c).

In the early twentieth century, residential architecture shifted from the exuberance of Victorian- and Eclectic-era designs and historical references in favor of basic functional forms, flowing interior spaces, and organic expressions. The Craftsman style was the most popular residential design from about 1905 to the early 1940s (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 568). The style was commonly applied to a long and narrow or boxy bungalow form, but bungalows were also adapted to other styles or displayed no stylistic elements.

The Minimal Traditional style became the favored small house design for working- and middle-class buyers beginning in the mid-1930s. Developed in response to changes in the housing market due to the Great Depression, the federal government established the National Housing Act of 1934 to stimulate the building industry and provide government-financed home loans. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) established guidelines for house designs to stipulate uniform standards for construction of affordable homes (Ames and McClelland 2002, 60–62). In their 1936 publication on house designs, *Principles of Planning Small Houses*, the FHA promoted the basic principle of "providing a maximum accommodation within a minimum of means, and, consequently, cost" (Ames and McClelland 2002, 61). This translated to a modest one-story house form that lacked complexity and non-essential features like intricate roof forms, dormers, cornices, or variations in cladding. The affordable and efficient designs provided housing during the Great Depression and because they could be quickly constructed, they met a burst in demand for housing from returning World War II veterans and their families. The Minimal Traditional style is prevalent in Refugio County; however, because of its

simplicity and ubiquity, individual Minimal Traditional-style residences often do not rise to the level of significance necessary for NRHP designation for their architecture. Neighborhoods of Minimal Traditional-style residences may be eligible as historic districts, however, none were identified during the survey.

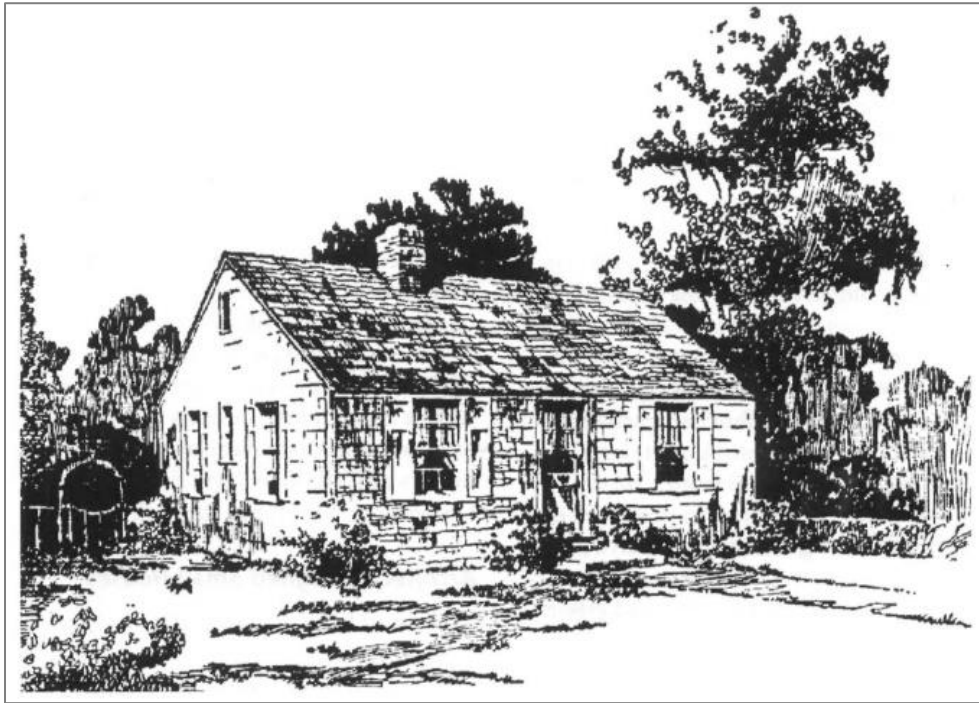


Figure 6: In 1936, the FHA released a series of standards and guidelines for economical house designs that could be financed with FHA-backed loans. This is the FHA's simplest house design, which became known in the home building industry as the "FHA minimum house." Box-like houses that reflect the FHA principles are common in Refugio County. Reproduced from *Principles of Planning Small Houses* (Washington: FHA, 1936). Source: Library of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Minimal Traditional style evolved into the Ranch style. The Ranch style was developed in Southern California in the mid-1930s and was one of the small house types the FHA favored in the 1940s. This approval made it easier to finance this house style than others (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 602–3). Promoted as modern on the inside and traditional on the outside, the Ranch house was considered a conservative approach to modernism and became the most common style of house built in the 1950s and 1960s. Often, these houses were developed simultaneously in clusters as part of automobile-oriented neighborhoods, but they were also commonly built on individual rural properties. The form of the Ranch house reflects the rise of automobile ownership. Whereas earlier houses were compacted on narrow lots to facilitate walking, automobile reliance allowed for development of wider lots, where houses could sprawl with more room between parcels. Ranch houses generally date from c. 1935 to 1975. Like the Minimal Traditional style, most Ranch-style residences were not architect designed. Developers commonly built entire neighborhoods of the style, but Ranch-style homes can be present as infill in older neighborhoods, where the form may be adapted to accommodate a narrow lot. Like Minimal Traditional-style houses, Ranch-style houses are so ubiquitous that they are infrequently individually eligible for the NRHP for their architecture and are more commonly eligible as part of a district. No Ranch style residential districts were identified in Refugio County during the survey.

The Minimal Ranch is a variation of the Ranch style. Early, smaller examples of the Ranch style may be referred to as Minimal Ranch, Ranchette, or Transitional Ranch (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 600–602). In addition to their small scale, these buildings generally lack a broad overhanging roof and other elaborations that may be found on Ranch-style dwellings. Minimal Ranch houses are commonly found in or near the same neighborhoods as and may be very similar to Minimal Traditional-style residences, and the distinction is often a matter of judgment (2015, 602). Minimal Ranch houses may have a broader profile and may be differentiated from the Minimal Traditional style by the presence of an aspect of the Ranch style, such as a large picture window, horizontal-sash double-hung windows, eaves, brick skirting, or an attached garage (2015, 602). Like Minimal Traditional dwellings, a Minimal Ranch-style house will rarely possess sufficient architectural distinction for individual eligibility for the NRHP. Other residential styles from the early to mid-twentieth century, like the Prairie School, Art Deco, Art Moderne, and post-war Modern styles, favored among architects, may be represented in small numbers within the more developed areas of Refugio County.

Many houses built after 1960 do not exhibit a clear style or historical form. Brick and concrete masonry unit (CMU) construction became more common than wood frame buildings for storm resiliency. Some houses from this era are elevated with pilings, piers, stilts, or concrete-masonry-unit blocks to resist flooding. The Ranch style persisted in this period. The Styled Ranch subtype is a Ranch house with historical or modern stylistic elements. In the 1960s and 1970s, builders began to produce Spanish Colonial Revival Ranch, Colonial Revival Ranch, Tudor Revival Ranch, Contemporary Ranch, Neoclassical Ranch, Traditional Ranch, and other types of Styled Ranch houses, some of which are architect-designed (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 695–704).

NON-RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE

Commercial, civic, educational, financial, recreational, industrial, and agricultural building types in Refugio County also followed national design trends. Early buildings were vernacular and constructed with available local materials. Once the railroad arrived, these buildings were replaced with more permanent structures constructed with dimensional lumber and prefabricated windows, doors, and decorative elements. As was true of residential architecture, other types of non-residential architecture evolved stylistically, moving from the elaborate Victorian-era designs and the historical references of Revival-era styles to more modern design, like the Art Deco, Moderne, and post-war Modern styles during the early- to mid-twentieth century.

Like in most of the United States, Refugio County's important institutions were housed in architecturally distinguished buildings. Banks of the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, such as the First National Bank of Refugio, typically erected high-style buildings to convey the stability of the institution. Some of the county's churches are architecturally distinct from other buildings in the community, including the 1901 Our Lady of Refuge Church, which was constructed in the Gothic Revival style (Our Lady of Refuge Centennial Book Committee 2001). San Antonio architect Atlee B. Ayres designed the 1917 county courthouse. The building was expanded in the 1950s with the addition of north and south wings designed by Irving Dunbar (Houston-Floyd 2002; Texas Historical Commission 1994).



Figure 7: Ben Shelton's Dry Goods and Groceries, constructed in 1907 (left) and the 1932 Refugio Theater (right). The ground floor storefronts of both buildings have been altered from their original designs in contemporary times but their historic character is still evident in the upper stories (Gerald Moorhead et al. 2018b).



Figure 8: The 1901 chapel of Our Lady of Refuge in Refugio replaced a 1868 stone sanctuary on the site. The 1868 structure was originally associated with the Mission Nuestra Señora del Refugio.



Figure 9: The Refugio County Courthouse (located at Courthouse Square), was constructed in 1917 and designed by San Antonio architect Atlee B. Ayers. The north wing, seen here, was extended in the 1950s dating to the photograph to after the 1950s. (Texas Historical Commission n.d.).



Figure 10: The 1939 Refugio County Memorial Hospital, designed in the Art Deco style by Irving H. Dunbar and Hedrick and Lindsley (Google Earth 2017; Moorhead et al. 2019).

By the mid-1950s, as car-culture became prevalent, stand-alone buildings with ample parking, drive-in facilities, and flashy signs that appealed to the motorist replaced pedestrian-oriented commercial-block buildings of the late-1800s and early-1900s (Longstreth 1987, 126–31). In the mid-twentieth century, owners of older buildings on downtown main streets attempted to stay current by removing then-dated architectural elements and replacing original cladding, windows, and doors with more modern versions (Esperdy 2008). This trend, coupled with the need to repair buildings from multiple hurricanes and other storms, has resulted in the alteration of many buildings in the commercial downtowns within Refugio County.

Some local resources are devoid of architectural influences or only offer the barest of stylistic references. Agricultural resources changed over time to reflect new practices, storage needs, and production, and though generally utilitarian, they can convey historical customs through their design. A barn, shed, windmill, cistern, or agricultural processing complex will have utilitarian components—typically of wood-frame construction with wood or corrugated metal exterior cladding and roof materials. Design influences likely to be present are limited to temporal practices, such as exposed rafter tails often apparent on buildings constructed in the 1920s and 1930s. Similarly, most industrial resources are restricted to necessary structural components and exterior materials that protect interior processing mechanisms. Exceptions are those industrial facilities that have public space for sales, marketing, and business offices. For example, a large petrochemical plant office building constructed in the 1950s might exhibit contemporaneously popular architectural influences, such as the International Style with smooth flat surfaces and minimalist decoration limited to highly defined ribbons of windows.

PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE

National architecture trends and major weather events guided development of three discrete periods of significance for this context. This earliest period includes resources constructed prior to 1919 that withstood that year's hurricane. These resources are rarely extant, especially nineteenth century resources. Examples reflect vernacular and railroad-era architecture and occasionally represent the National Folk and Victorian Era styles. From 1919 to 1945 residents rebuilt after the hurricane in traditional architecture styles, Revival Era styles, and some instances of early modernism. After 1945 trends changed decidedly, and from then until 1973 encompasses post-World War II-era architecture and modern design.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architecture

RELATED PROPERTY TYPES

- Most property types have potential to be eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

THEME: COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Early development in the area that would become Refugio County was loosely planned, first by the Spanish, who established missions and a fort, and later by the Mexican government, who utilized empresarios to settle the land. The Spanish land grant system, which was also adopted by the Mexican government following independence from Spain, was the method by which Refugio County was first settled in the 1820s and 1830s. Land grants issued by the Mexican government in the Refugio County area during that period were frequently contested by other land holders during the subsequent period of Texas Independence (1836-1845), and many were ultimately voided. Empresarios Power and Hewetson were instrumental in the early settlement of the area.

EARLY SETTLEMENT (1830-1860)

After the Spanish period, the earliest European settlers in the area were Irish Catholic and Mexican immigrants brought in by James Power and James Hewetson in the early 1830s. Power and Hewetson's empresario grant was awarded in 1831 and included the mission and the surrounding area. Most of these immigrants settled around the ruins of the Nuestra Señora del Refugio in the modern-day City of Refugio. The Villa of Refugio was established the same year and became the center of the Refugio Municipality in 1834.

The Battle of Refugio was fought in the town during the Texas Revolution from March 12-15, 1836. The battle was a series of fights which almost completely destroyed the town (Leffler 2020b; Long 2020a). Led by Carlos de la Garza, approximately 80 Mexican rancheros raided the village of Refugio. Mexican troops suffered significant losses but emerged victorious by March 15, 1836. The Texan loss at the Battle of Refugio contributed to the later Goliad Massacre and ultimately the defeat of Texans at the Battle of Coleto making the Battle of Refugio significant to the Texas Revolution (Roell 2023).

Settlement in the region was slow during the republic period as the area was somewhat remote and subject to Mexican raids. A number of settlements and towns were founded in the coastal areas of Refugio County (present-day Aransas County) between the 1830s and the onset of the Civil War: Aransas City on Live Oak Peninsula, Lamar on Lookout Point, St. Joseph/Aransas on San Jose Island, and Carlos City on the Blackjack Peninsula (Long 2020a).

The population declined county-wide during the Mexican War (1846-1848) but rebounded thereafter. During the 1850s, the county's economy revolved around cattle ranching. By 1850 the county had a population of 288, including 19 enslaved people. Corn was the most important crop at the time, and 6,000 bushels were produced in 1850. By comparison, 9,000 cattle and 190 sheep were reported. The City of Refugio continued to grow slowly, as recounted in John Leffler's history of Refugio County:

Observer James Murray Doughty captured the prevailing spirit of fastidious progress as he described the county in the 1850s:

"Refugio has 3 dry-goods stores, 2 public hotels, 1 private boarding house, 3 churches, 2 schools, 2 physicians, 1 dentist and 1 lawyer, and no drinking shops and no paupers" (Leffler 2020a).

By 1860, the population had risen to 1,748 people (including 234 enslaved people) and more than 385,000 acres in the county were in farms and ranches, and of those, 5,120 were improved with houses, agricultural buildings and structures, and/or had been cultivated. The county produced 29,000 bushels of corn and 230 bales of cotton. The county's cattle population boomed to 154,000 head and 4,000 sheep were reported in the agricultural census (Leffler 2020a).

CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION (1861-1900)

The county's economy downturned sharply as a result of the Civil War. The cattle industry suffered, and the cattle population dropped from 154,000 in 1860 to 32,503 by 1866. Cotton farming virtually disappeared, and no cotton was grown in the county through 1870. The town of Refugio had been reduced to only a few private residences, the town council having been suspended in 1861 (Leffler 2020a).

Slavery evolved in southeastern Texas much as it did through the South. The majority of Texas's White inhabitants had been natives of the South, and they brought the traditions of their home states with them as they settled the eastern timberlands and southern central plains. They ultimately turned to the production of cotton as a cash crop, which was profitable due to the use of slave labor on the frontier. By 1846, Texas as a whole had more than 30,000 Black slaves and produced a considerable amount of cotton (R. B. Campbell 2021). However, because the production of cotton was relatively low in this region, the ratio of slave to White population was lower in Refugio County relative to counties to the north and east (Dase et al. 2010, 30–31). The US Census data for 1870 on Refugio County shows roughly the same number of free Black persons as enslaved Black persons in the previous decade, suggesting that the freedmen population largely remained in the region following emancipation, at least in the short term.

The cattle industry recovered quickly after the war, and Refugio County was full of range country. Communities along the coast (present-day Aransas County) prospered during the cattle boom of the late 1860s through 1870s. The town of Refugio became a center for hide and tallow factories (Leffler 2020a).

The settlement of St. Mary's of Aransas was established on the north shore of Copano Bay by Power and Hewetson colonist Joseph F. Smith, and it played an important role in the economics of the area in the second half of the nineteenth century. The town "flourished from about 1850 to 1886" and "became a leading lumber mart" and "also shipped hides, tallow, cattle, and cotton" via wagon and cart trains between the port city and Refugio, Goliad, Beeville, San Antonio, and other inland communities. The community was serviced by the Morgan Line of steamships beginning around 1868, and shortly thereafter the town was briefly named the Refugio County seat. However, Copano Bay's submerged reefs claimed several steamships which ultimately caused the Morgan Lines to discontinue service following storm damage in 1875 (Huson 2021; Leffler 2020b). Hit by disastrous storms in 1886 and 1887 that destroyed the town's wharves, St. Mary's was reduced to a small village by the early 1890s (Long 2020a). What remained was annexed by Bayside in ca. 1910 and by 1948 only two or three houses remained in the area. Today the town of St. Mary's is considered a ghost town with only the cemetery remaining. (Huson 2021).

Maritime access played a large role in the development of Refugio County in its early years, with St. Mary's role as a center for the building materials industry, and Rockport's status as a beef processing and shipping center in the early years of the cattle boom. This changed when Aransas County was partitioned from Refugio in 1871. Maritime access

was largely lost to Refugio County, and Rockport, now part of Aransas County, supplanted St. Mary's as a local shallow-draft port. Thereafter, Refugio County's economic activities centered on cattle ranching and processing and cotton production.

By 1870, on the eve of the Aransas County split, Refugio County was home to 176 farms and ranches, 100,000 head of cattle, and a population of 2,324. The number of farms in the county decreased to 123 by 1880, partly as the result of the county division and partly due to the forced exodus of Mexican American ranchers during the preceding decade. See the Ethnic Heritage section of this report for more information on the Mexican American rancher exodus. The population also declined, falling to 1,733. The loss of the county's maritime access and its lack of a railroad hampered growth in the late nineteenth century. When the county was divided in the 1870s, Refugio's coastline was diminished leaving only two major access points at Hynes and Copano Bays largely cutting off the county from convenient maritime ports. Later, the number of farms slowly increased, reaching 159 by 1900, although heads of cattle in the county declined, falling from 100,000 in 1870 to 77,300 in 1880, and to less than 36,000 by 1900. Sheep herds likewise declined during this period (Leffler 2020a).

EARLY-TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT (1900-1925)

Cotton production increased in the first decades of the twentieth century. As the number of farms in the county increased between 1900 and 1930 the output of cotton increased in kind. Despite the diversion of some range land to crop farming during the period, cattle ranching remained an important part of the local culture and economy. Natural gas and petroleum were discovered in the county around 1920 and would play a large role in the county's economy in the early- to mid-twentieth century (Leffler 2020a).

Finally, in 1905, a railroad reached Refugio County and facilitated economic growth. The St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway (StLBMR) was constructed through the county running from Brownsville, Texas to Gulf Coast Junction in Houston. Creation of the railroad spurred new development throughout Refugio County. Large ranches were subdivided into smaller farms, and many settlements were established in the period that immediately followed the arrival of the railroad (Leffler 2020a). In fact, all of Refugio County's towns, except for Refugio, were developed by ranchers and speculators in the early twentieth century. The locations and success of the twentieth-century settlements were influenced both by the coming of the StLBMR and by the limited maritime access of the Hynes and Copano Bays:

- *Woodsboro*

Woodsboro is located approximately five miles southwest of Refugio and was developed in 1906 by W. C. Johnson and George P. Pugh, experienced real estate developers from Danville, Illinois. The town was just north of the "Church" siding on the StLBMR. At its initial founding in 1906, the settlement used the name "Church" as it was sited north of the existing church along the StLBMR. The town was initially platted in November and December of 1906 and was re-named Woodsboro in 1907. The town was named for Captain Tobias D. Wood who had sold Bonnie View Ranch to developers allowing for the town's early growth. The first building was a large frame hotel, constructed to house prospective buyers. A post office was installed in the hotel shortly after. Johnson and Pugh promoted the farmlands surrounding Woodsboro in advertisements distributed across Texas and the Midwest. By 1908, there was a school, cotton gin, lumber yard, Masonic temple, and a number of

dwellings. The town's first newspaper, the *Woodsboro Hustler*, began publication in 1910 and the Bank of Refugio opened its Woodsboro Branch in 1912. The town was electrified in 1913, and a group of local businessmen working as "the Commercial Club" organized the town's first waterworks. The town experienced a small boom when oil was discovered nearby in 1928 and it incorporated the same year. It weathered the Great Depression as oil production increased, and it had 35 businesses and a population of 1,426 by 1941. Although the number of farms surrounding Woodsboro declined after World War II, the oil and gas industry sustained the local economy through the 1980s (Leffler 2020c).

- *Tivoli*

Tivoli, located in the northeastern portion of the county, was founded by Preston R. Austin in 1907. Austin was a successful local rancher and entrepreneur who owned the nearby Tivoli Ranch and established a large cotton gin and commissary in the area. He built and donated a catholic church and a school, two of the first buildings of the town, about 1908. Tivoli's first post office opened in 1912, and in the same year a branch of the StLBMR reached the town, spurring rapid growth. The town became a shipping center for cotton farmers and ranchers and by 1914 it had a population of 400. That year, the town was home to two general stores, a bank, drugstore, blacksmith, and hotel, and it also had telephone service. Its population peaked at 700 in 1928 but declined to only 350 during the Great Depression. The population rebounded to about 500 by 1940 and has remained at about that level through 2000. The town's principal industries include ranching, oil and gas, and tourism (Long 2020b).

- *Bonnie View*

Bonnie View, located on FM 629 in the southern portion of the county, was established as a crossroads trading community by local farmers on land subdivided from the Bonnie View Ranch. John Howland subdivided his ranch lands between 1907 and 1908. Local farmers established a store, gin, and a school. By 1988, the population had dwindled to 25 but increased to 135 by the year 2000 (Huson 2020b).

- *Bayside*

Bayside is located in the southeastern portion of the county along the mainland shore of Copano Bay. The town was founded in 1908 by E. O. Burton and A. H. Danforth near the former townsites of Black Point and St. Mary's of Aransas. Burton and Danforth hoped to attract fruit and vegetable farmers to the area and platted 505 five-acre tracts designed for truck farming, as well as a town site of "nineteen blocks and one hotel block." Purchasers of a 5-acre farm tract were also granted a lot in town. Although some prospective residents bought property, most of the land was purchased by speculators. The town included public parkland along the bay shore, a public bathhouse, and a wharf. Water was provided to the community for free from a well drilled at the edge of town. By 1909, the Bayside Post Office had been established, but the nearest locations for shipping and banking transactions were in Rockport (12 miles away by boat) or Woodsboro (18 miles away over land). In 1912, Bayside had a wooden schoolhouse, and the Church of Christ of Bayside was erected in 1913. The town was electrified

when the Central Power and Light Company built a highline to the town in 1926. Bayside experienced extensive damage during the Hurricane of 1919 – the wharves, outbuildings, nearby bridges, and at least three homes were destroyed. The Hurricane of 1942 “resulted in even greater devastation.” In 1946 the local school was consolidated with the Woodsboro Independent School District. The principal industries in the town, which was incorporated in 1977, are largely based on tourism and fishing (Benowitz 2021a).

- *Austwell*

Austwell is located near Hynes Bay in northeastern Refugio County and was founded by Preston R. Austin, in partnership with Jesse C. McDowell in 1911. The name “Austwell” is a combination of Austin and McDowell. Austin outfitted the town with a water system consisting of cypress water mains “in every street and a fire plug on almost every corner.” The StLBMR’s Austwell branch terminated in the town. In 1912, Austwell established a small wharf on Hynes Bay, but it was only serviceable by light drafts. In 1914, Austin had ambitions for a port city and had a channel dredged through the bay to accommodate larger vessels, but the channel filled rapidly, and the effort was unsuccessful. By 1914, the town had incorporated and was home to the Freemason’s Lieuen M. Rogers Lodge. Austwell suffered extensive damage in the Hurricanes of 1919 and 1942. Since that time, the population has declined from about 300 in 1944 to 192 in 2000 (Huson 2020a; 2020c).

MID- AND LATE-TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT (1925-1980)

Refugio County began significant gas production around 1926, when the Houston Gulf Company completed a gas pipeline in the area. By that time, several minor oil fields were in operation. The Greta oilfield opened in 1928 and had 186 oil wells with a combined output of 5 million barrels by 1934. In 1936, Refugio County produced almost 9,756,000 barrels of crude (Stamey, Montgomery, and Jr 1936; Leffler 2020a).

The population expanded between 1900 and 1930 in response to the expansion of farming and the growing oil and gas industry. The county had a population of 2,814 in 1910, 4,050 in 1920, and 7,691 in 1930. By 1930, the City of Refugio had 65 businesses, and it built a new water and sewer system, as well as a new city hall building. Most of the city’s streets were paved by 1934, and in that year a new school building was constructed (Leffler 2020b).

The Great Depression impacted cotton production in the 1930s and it declined steadily through the 1940s. The number of farms in the county decreased, but the population increased as the oil and gas industry supported the economy. The county boasted at least 11 oilfields by 1943 and production continued to rise through the late 1970s (Leffler 2020a).

In the 1930s, the wildlife that had once been abundant in the region were quickly depleted by overfishing and sport and commercial hunting. Hunting had decimated wild bird populations in particular, including that of the whooping crane. A major wildlife refuge established in the 1930s, the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, is partially located in the county at its eastern border. The refuge was established by an executive order given by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1937 and was originally called the Aransas Migratory Waterfowl Refuge (Kleiner 2020a).

Suburbanization began regionally in the mid-twentieth century with the construction of planned subdivisions, but Refugio County has remained primarily rural. While Refugio, Woodsboro, and other settlements in the county saw waves

of new construction to accommodate returning GIs and an influx of oil and gas workers in the mid-twentieth century, extensive suburban style developments are not evident. The population continued to rise in the county following World War II. Between 1946 and 1949, about 100 new houses were built in subdivisions around Refugio. By 1960, Refugio had 115 businesses, and by 1966 it had 140 businesses and about 5,000 residents. It began to decline, along with other municipalities in the county, after the late 1960s and early 1970s as prices dropped and local petroleum production declined (Leffler 2020b).

PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Four periods of significance have been developed for this historic context. The Early Settlement period spans from 1830-1860, although few intact resources are extant. The Civil War and Reconstruction period spans the period from the war to the beginning of the twentieth century (1861-1900) and accounts primarily for extant historic resources in the City of Refugio and rural agricultural resources constructed during the period. Most resources from this period have been altered where extant. The era of Early-Twentieth-Century Development spans from 1900 through 1946 and includes railroad-related resources developed after the turn of the twentieth century through World War II. The era of Mid- and Late-Twentieth-Century Development spans from 1946 to 1980, covering the post-war era and subsequent development through the decline of the oil industry locally in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Settlement, Community Development, Architecture, Engineering

RELATED PROPERTY TYPES

- Homesteads and residential dwellings, as well as government and commercial buildings from all periods of significance noted herein have the potential for significance under this theme.

THEME: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The theme of Economic Development in Refugio County encompasses three subsections: Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry. Refugio County's economy has been primarily focused on agricultural production and supporting businesses. Although the county has shoreline along Copano Bay, it lacks the maritime history and resources present in the neighboring counties. In the early twentieth century, the oil and gas industry developed and continued to support the county economically through the 1980s.

SUBTHEME: AGRICULTURE

The importance of agriculture, a leading economic force in Refugio County for almost two centuries, is readily apparent in the rural built environment. Shaping their practices to local geographic, topographic, and climatic circumstances, agriculturalists learned to produce successful yields. Relative to many other Texas counties, few ranches and even fewer farmsteads were established in the county, although holdings were comparatively large. Relevant historical agents, especially exceptional transportation networks and a steady labor supply, linked the county's agricultural yields to numerous regional and national markets. Cash-crop production was limited until the twentieth century, and even then, only nominal amounts of corn and cotton were harvested. Family operations regularly improved their farmsteads with vegetables, fruits, and small orchards for provisional use but did not produce enough volume of these truck crops to report in many aggregate agricultural decennial censuses for Refugio County. Beef cattle, sheep, and their byproducts were the dominant local products throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Throughout these years, tropical storms and hurricanes caused regular difficulties, but no apparent changes to the county's agricultural practices. By the last quarter of the twentieth century, however, only cattle ranching remained a constant.

Early Agricultural Developments, 1824–1845

Since post-contact history under Spanish rule, local agricultural practices focused on raising livestock and limited feed crops that left minimal enduring impressions on the landscape. By 1835, the Mexican government had issued most large land grants within the county to native Tejanos or early European settlers (Leffler 2020a; Texas General Land Office 1921). Livestock ranching was a likely principal source of income for these landowners, but their holdings were loosely ordered and only occupied for part of each year (Faulk 1964, 261–63). When American-born Anglo-American migrants, typically born west of the Mississippi River, and foreign-born Western European immigrants settled the area in the 1830s and 1840s, they adopted Tejano ranching traditions, as these tried methods eased their adaptation to unfamiliar and often inhospitable conditions (Jackson 1986, 597–99, 616–17). Landowners delegated management to cowhands who shepherded freely wandering semi-wild livestock on the open range where few built resources marked the landscape (Kleiner 2020a). Statehood in 1845 triggered changes in local agricultural production.

Nineteenth-Century Agriculture, 1846–1900

Relative to typical Texas counties with numerous small farms, nineteenth-century Refugio County had few, but large, agricultural properties improved with essential domestic and agricultural resource types. In the antebellum years, only a small number of farmers had more than 10 improved acres (US Census Bureau 1850). The number and average sizes of agricultural properties fluctuated mildly throughout the last half of the century. Nevertheless, property values rose

regularly and appreciably, indicating that agriculturalists were improving their land with domestic and agricultural buildings and structures. A typical agricultural property would have at least one dwelling, possibly other small dwellings for workers, and related domestic auxiliary resources, especially a hand-dug water well and a privy, a gated fence might protect domestic landscape features like a kitchen garden or an ornamental or swept yard. Refugio County's agriculturalists benefited only modestly from technological advancements like the scythe, plow, reaper, thresher, and cotton gin until after 1905 when they could finally purchase affordable new tools delivered in railroad shipments. These acquisitions required protective equipment sheds.

Table 6: Aggregate Agricultural Decennial Census Statistics for Refugio County, 1850-1900

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
Number of agricultural properties	--	--	--	123	147	139
Average acreage	--	--	--	3,691	3,378	3,447
Value of all agricultural properties	\$19,750	\$738,651	\$135,300	\$702,435	\$1,378,620	\$2,404,940
Equipment value	\$765	\$5,635	\$8,080	\$8,624	\$9,200	\$10,930
Bushels of corn	6,240	29,115	41,555	27,875	29,268	44,236
Bales of ginned cotton	--	230	--	15	120	402
Pounds of wool	250	200	13,955	21,070	6,448	8,560
Dairy cows	3,146	1,983	1,556	929	839	704
Beef cattle	6,835	153,758	99,785	77,342	73,252	60,534
Swine	323	3,964	4,333	1,778	1,081	2,435
Horses	390	4,730	9,949	5,628	3,451	3,302
Asses and Mules	17	837	1,002	525	177	913
Oxen	143	491	584	37	16	--
Sheep	190	3,961	4,858	7,452	8,151	1,965

(US Census Bureau 1850; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office 1864; US Census Bureau 1870; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office 1883; 1894; 1902b; 1902a)

The towns of Refugio County persisted in historic locations due to their access to local, regional, and national markets which were increasingly reliable transportation networks. The main prerequisite to withstanding the Gulf Coast's recurrent hostile climatic conditions was this ready access which assured towns were reconstructed following major weather or other climactic events due to their established accessibility. Chief exports were initially beef hides and tallow and, later in the century, sheep byproducts as well. Its coastal position exposed Refugio County to unpredictable tropical storms and long, hot, humid summers that allowed for an 11-month-long growing season. Agricultural products were shipped to markets on early overland routes via Goliad or Sinton, or over water on schooners, sloops, steamers, and packets from St. Mary's, and later Rockport. Limited railroad routes were accessible in the area by the late 1880s, but the railroad did not come to Refugio County itself until the early twentieth century (Dase et al. 2010; Long 2020a; Leffler 2020a). By the late nineteenth century, mechanically refrigerated freight train cars opened markets to livestock ranchers who hoped to sell perishable meat in addition to more-durable byproducts.

The agricultural economy depended on a supply of competent cheap labor that, in the antebellum era, included enslaved people. By 1850 eight enslavers held a total of 19 enslaved persons in rural Refugio County. By 1860 that number had risen to 234 enslaved persons held by 61 enslavers (U.S. Census Bureau 1850; Leffler 2020a).

Nineteenth-century cash-crop production in Refugio County was lackluster given the county's focus on stock raising, but local agrarians continued to improve their farms and ranches. Throughout the century, local agriculturalists practiced

subsistence farming with limited, if any, participation in the market economy. Corn, versatile and essential to survival, was the requisite crop that provided food for the family and grain, hay, and grass for livestock, and many agricultural properties likely had corncribs for surplus storage. All parts of the plant were valued: the grain for food, the husks for filling mattresses, the stalks and leaves for roof thatch and erosion control. Farmers also grew beans, oats, sweet potatoes, melons, and other vegetables on a few acres or less to supplement their diets (C. A. Jones 2005, 38). Although most of Refugio County is near sea-level, these foods may have been stored in cellars. Until the mid-twentieth century, many families kept one or two dairy cows, swine, or chickens to sustain their diets with protein. These animals required either feed or grazing land and small barns, sheds, or coops for protection from the elements and predators. Even as reliable new tools and horse-pulled equipment enabled thousands of Texas farmers to grow the fickle cotton plant, local production remained extremely limited until the mid-twentieth century. In fact, local cash-crop production of all types was inconsequential until 1900, with few Refugio County crops reported in aggregate decennial agricultural censuses. Thus, the county likely had very few mills for grains or syrup and cotton gins.

By 1870, more than 100,000 cattle were reported on the county's farms and ranches. Many of the county's stock ranchers were Mexican Americans who typically had relatively small property holdings and depended on free range and water sources to support their herds. Land use practices changed significantly during the 1870s when large landholders began to fence off their properties. At the same time, many Mexican American ranchers were driven away by violence and threats of violence. By the early twentieth century, only a handful of Mexican Americans owned land in the county. Many ranch lands were consolidated, and the number of farms in the county fell from 176 to 123 between 1870 and 1880 (Leffler 2020a).

Shifts in livestock numbers between 1870 and 1880 demonstrate a reduction in stock due to the separation of Aransas County's ranches as observed in Table 6. Although the census data indicates a loss of population, livestock, and land area, the decline in these numbers is not considerable given the county had been divided in the 1870s and portions of the population, land area, and therefore livestock, were incorporated to neighboring counties. Both beef cattle and sheep were profitable with minimal care, although ranching required understanding seasons and weather conditions, diseases that could quickly deplete herds, range conditions for grazing, water, and business finances. Herders moved livestock to the best grazing conditions, usually on the prairies in spring, summer, and fall, and in brushlands or river bottoms during the brief winter season (Freier 1979, 120–21). Although they were seldom housed in buildings, some ranchers provided feed and water troughs for their herds. The number of beef cattle declined slightly between 1850 and 1860, but then rose continuously. It peaked in 1900, despite two severe financial panics that crippled many Texas ranchers, weather extremes in 1886–1887 and 1891, and the closing of the open range with barbed-wire fences in the last half of that decade (Freier 1979, 120). The gradual installation of fences that defined perimeter boundaries prompted ranchers to divide their land holdings more selectively and, using interior fences, defined pasturelands and land-use functions for rotating livestock among pasturelands and segregating herds as needed. They built corrals and pens to hold the animals, chutes to direct them, and, on more remote sections, may have installed windmills with related troughs or tanks to water them. In general, because these animals were driven to markets in San Antonio and beyond, the presence of slaughterhouses and tanneries on local ranches was uncommon, although possible on larger holdings. However, with meat-packing operations in nearby towns, these types of resources, along with stockyards, were more probable in these urban settings. Sheep numbers crested in 1880 before a sharp decline in 1890 and modest rebound by 1900; pounds of blade-shorn wool fluctuated accordingly. Wool may have been stored briefly on local ranches but

was more probably transported to urban centers for storage and shipment. Because ranchers used working livestock—horses, mules, asses, and oxen—to manage their cattle and sheep herds on large pastures and extensive rangelands, the county had more draft animals per capita than the state average. These valuable animals were typically housed in barns with interior feed racks and associated corrals or pens.

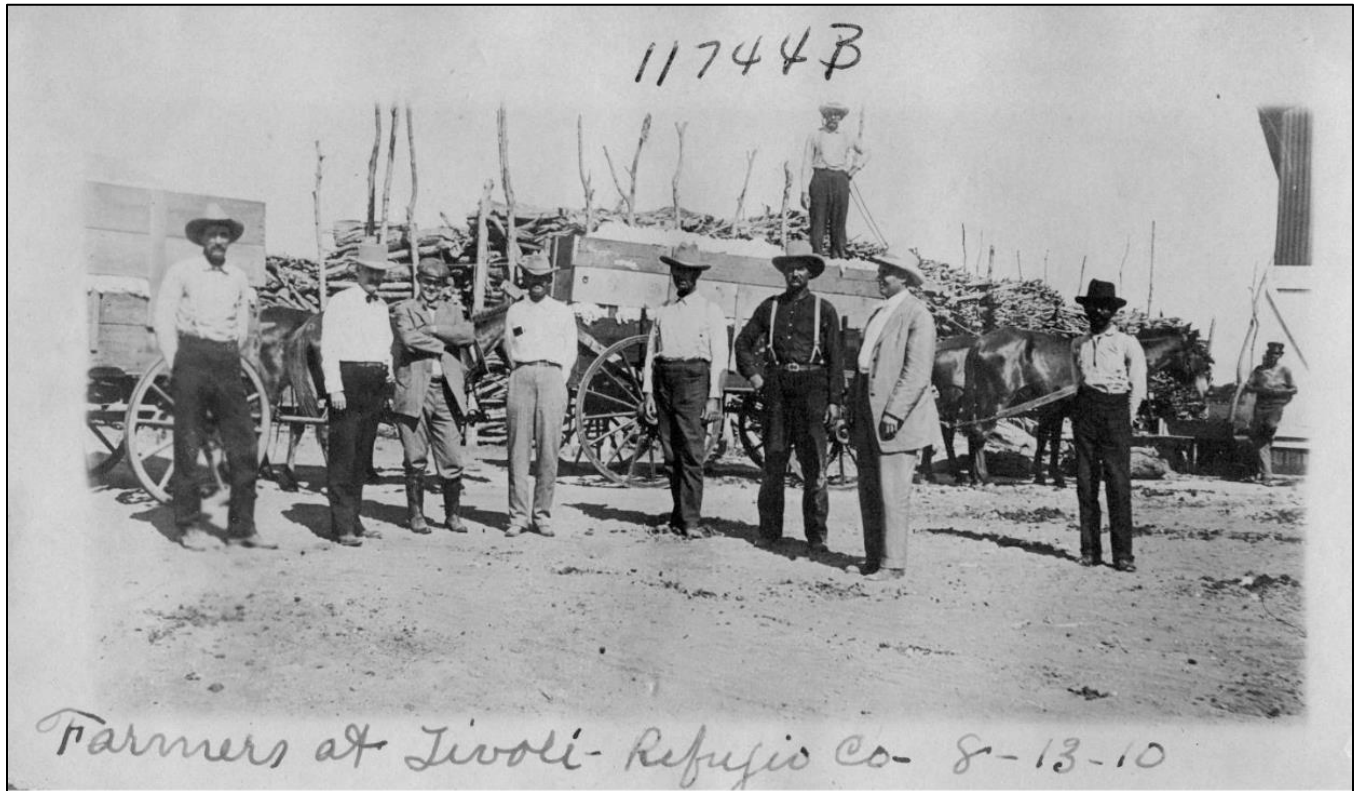


Figure 11: This 1910 photograph shows farmers in Tivoli with horse-drawn carts (Mitchell 1910a).

First Half of the 20th Century, 1900–1942

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the built environment of rural Refugio County evolved with more agricultural properties and the growing prevalence of tenancy. The number and value of agricultural properties rose substantially in 1910 and crested in 1930 before ebbing with typical Depression-era losses by 1940. Most agricultural properties consisted of defined domestic workspace with a main dwelling, water well, privy, and sundry small buildings and structures to support domestic life. Technological advances encouraged investment in equipment, especially increasingly affordable motorized trucks and tractors. Agriculturalists built garages and sheds to protect this property. Tenancy had spiked by 1920 through 1930 and declined by 1940 as landowners reclaimed their property to combat the depressive economy (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1942). Tenant properties had similar domestic and agricultural resources comparably organized into workspaces. Tenant dwellings were typically newer but less adequate than those on owner-operated properties (Gray 1925, 581). This was likely to be true for other buildings and structures on tenant properties.

Table 7: Aggregate Agricultural Census Statistics for Refugio County, 1900-1940

	1900	1910	1925	1930	1940
Number of agricultural properties	139	236	510	507	395
Average acreage	3,447	995	135	738	1,358
Value of all agricultural properties	\$2,404,940	\$5,370,864	\$6,903,115	\$9,710,038	\$8,501,357
Equipment value	\$10,930	\$59,842	\$296,050	\$361,507	\$43,906
Percent owner/tenant	49/41	57/42	33/74	22/73	29/56
Bushels of corn	44,236	14,386	175,350	102,437	232,734
Bales of ginned cotton	402	1,179	8,626	6,972	9,529
Pounds of wool	8,560	9,300*	623	7,780	6,435
Sheep	1,965	1,462	97	1,388	1,476
Swine	2,435	2,295	637	1,705	2,273
Dairy cows/beef cattle	704/60,534	626/28,681	941/2,292	987/42,590	1,302/45,552
Horses/Asses and Mules	3,302/913/--	1,608/755	767/3200	1,365/1,636	1,388/655

* With no weight statistic provided for wool in 1910, this figure represents the 1,240 fleeces shorn at 7.5 pounds per unit.

(U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census 1913; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1921; 1932; 1942; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office 1902a; 1902d).

Refugio County's livestock yields were fickle in the early decades of the twentieth century. In accord with state and national trends, livestock numbers and yields generally succumbed to Depression-era recession by 1940. Local agriculturalists continued to raise swine, dairy cows, poultry, and provisional crops to sustain their families. They also retained relatively large numbers of draft animals for livestock management purposes, and these animals plus dairy cows were sheltered in barns or sheds. The scourge of Texas Fever, the common appellation for an epidemic of babesia that overtook the cattle industry in the late nineteenth century, came under control after the turn of the century as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Animal Industry instituted a campaign to stamp out the disease using in-ground dipping vats. Cattle were guided individually through a slender working chute to a narrow concrete channel, immersed progressively deeper in the vat until briefly but fully submerged in a cleansing solution, then directed through gradually shallower levels until exiting (Dase et al. 2010, E12). The number of sheep and amount of shorn wool peaked in 1930, and these animals were plunge-dipped in similar in-ground structures designed for their smaller stature. By this time, some producers had replaced blades with shearing machines to shave fleece from the animals. Shearing was typically accomplished on a raised wood platform or concrete slab, often under cover of a roof. Those with larger herds may have had wood-frame shearing sheds. As was the case elsewhere in Texas, livestock raisers in Refugio County suffered from deflation and bankruptcies after 1920 (Richardson and Hinton 2021).

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the county's two cash crops - cotton and corn - achieved new heights. The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide succinctly described farming in Refugio County in 1904:

The principal crops are cotton and corn, but potatoes, melons, and all varieties of vegetables are grown in small quantities. The growing of rice has proved successful, but farming as a distinct pursuit is little followed, attention being chiefly directed to stock raising. [...] The large pastures are covered with a heavy growth of sedge and mesquite grass, on which large herds of cattle graze year-round (A. H. Belo & Company 1904).

Having attained a high in 1900, corn production vacillated decennially, setting a record high in 1940. These yields upped the need for storing corn in storage cribs, bins, silos, or barns on agricultural properties and in similar structures or

elevators at feed mills. As the decades progressed, Refugio County's agriculturalists turned to cotton, and ginned bales almost doubled every decennial beginning in 1910, for a record high in 1940. Cotton growers usually transported their yields soon after harvest to a complex where the raw material was stored in a cotton house or warehouse, ginned, and formed into 400-pound bales for sale and shipment (Freier 1979, 225).



Figure 12: Photograph of a gin at Tivoli in Refugio County, Texas, dated August 13, 1910 (Mitchell 1910b).

Fundamental changes to transportation impacted agricultural production and practices in Refugio County between about 1910 and 1940. Improvements to and expansion of transportation networks benefited local agriculturalists. These included channel dredging, enhancements to vehicular roads and highways, and construction of the StLBMR, all of which provided easier access for exporting goods to more inland markets and importing modern equipment and building materials, like milled and dimensional lumber (Kleiner 2020). During this period, on larger farms, small, simple dwellings for migrant and permanent workers were constructed (Figure 13). These housing improvements allowed workers to reside near their place of employment and remained in use during the 1900s.



Figure 13: This 1940 photograph shows houses constructed for permanent and migratory workers on a large cotton farm in Refugio County, Texas (Lee, Russell n.d.)

The effects of the Great Depression on local agriculturalists are also underrepresented in sources reviewed to date. In the 1930s, the federal government offered relief programs to tackle the devastating effects of severe economic conditions. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 implemented a series of programs designed to control surpluses and maintain a minimum income level for agriculturalists. In the interest of removing glut from overabundant markets, farmers and ranchers reduced acreage, accepted quotas, abandoned cultivated crops, and killed livestock. Farmers engaged in soil conservation practices, such as terracing, to prevent erosion on overused croplands; in current aerial images, however, remnants of these practices are not readily apparent in Refugio County. Qualifying local farmers, both land holders and tenants, diversified with legume crops and Bermuda pastures; conserved soil and prevented erosion using unspecified practices; and received payment for reduction of cotton acreage (*Victoria Advocate* 1937). Although some of these organizations existed before and during the depression, in its aftermath, local branches of federal- and state-sponsored agencies or private organizations played a greater role in helping and monitoring agricultural activity. These include the agricultural extension service, soil conservation district-including Copano Bay Soil and Water Conservation District and agricultural association; women-based organizations like home demonstration clubs; and others that encouraged the participation of younger generations, like 4-H and Future Farmers of America.

Compensation measures taken during the extended national agricultural depression aided Refugio County's farm and ranch families, although housing conditions remained bleak for many as late as 1940. In addition to dwellings, most

rural properties still maintained the same types of domestic and agricultural buildings and structures as in previous decades, but this would change more dramatically after World War II.

Modern Agriculture, 1942–1973

After World War II through the mid-1970s, agriculture remained a substantial part of the local economy with almost two-thirds of land in the county in agricultural use during this period. When the number of agricultural properties in Refugio County declined to fewer than 300 in every decennial after 1949, average acreage fluctuated, but ultimately increased, a sign of consolidation and the move toward agribusiness. By 1950, more than 200 farms were commercial establishments (Kleiner 2020a). Concomitantly, tenancy gradually and substantially declined and a parallel rise in agricultural property values was dramatic, surging between 1959 and 1974.

Table 8: Aggregate Agricultural Census Statistics for Refugio County, 1949-1974

	1949	1959	1969	1974
Number of agricultural properties	279	260	294	250
Average acreage	1,750	1,916	1,336	1,927
Average value of agricultural property	\$61,435	\$115,207	\$171,028	\$460,368
Percent owner/tenant	66/34	67/33	69/31	76/24
Bushels of corn	80,517	83,859	--	117,552
Bales of ginned cotton	10,220	6,571	8,490	3,590
Pounds of wool	2,089	2,399	--	--
Sheep	664	448	44	--
Swine	998	969	363	295
Dairy cows	780	164	41	25
Beef cattle	60,099	36,665	31,973	41,478
Draft livestock	1,427	895	527	483

(U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1956; 1942; 1952; 1972; 1977).

Apart from beef cattle, Refugio County’s agricultural yields plummeted after World War II in large part due to the 1950s drought. Fewer families raised provisional livestock or crops, and the number of dairy cows shrank considerably. With increasingly inefficient drainage, poor irrigation, and soil compaction, the few local cash crops all but dissipated by the early 1970s. In the aftermath of the drought, sheep herding decreased precipitously by 1969 and ceased completely by 1974 (Table 8). In 1979 about 78 percent of the county was used for grazing livestock while 19 percent of the county was cropland, and the remaining 3 percent was in urban and other land uses. Cattle operations remained the main livestock enterprises, while grain sorghum, cotton, and corn were the primary crops (Guckian 1988).

The built environment changed dramatically after World War II. In the domestic sphere, original main houses had often already evolved with additions to enlarge and modernize to accommodate a growing family. Agriculturalists who prospered might abandon, demolish, or otherwise replace an older dwelling with a newly constructed home. Engine-powered vehicles and aircraft—trucks, tractors, small airplanes, and helicopters—diminished the need for draft animals and related buildings even as cattle ranchers grew their herds in the post-drought years to more than 42,000 head. Livestock feed lots and auction houses became common after the 1950s, attracting slaughterhouses, tanneries, and the meat-packing industry from their more typical locations in large cities. Soil conservation districts, drainage districts, and the county agricultural extension office, all of which supported farmers and ranchers with various programs, built

facilities to sustain their staff and projects. Large wood- and metal-frame barns protected vehicles, aircraft, and equipment, such as combines, mower conditioners, pickup balers, windrowers, and harvesters. Operators added miles of fences, interior roads, with advantageously placed permanent corrals and pens, related loading chutes, and gates with cattle guards, and more unusual additions like landing strips. Post-drought, many added water sources using windmills and natural drainages and storing supplies in troughs, livestock tanks, or reservoirs. Ranchers required increasingly heavy capital investments for these improvements. Large-scale ranches more readily adapted to an industry that remained generally cyclical but embraced new technology. Breeding and industry promotion took a progressively greater role (Richardson and Hinton 2021). Organizations like the soil conservation district and agricultural extension service became increasingly active, working with local farmers and ranchers to improve practices. By 1982, 91 percent of the land in the county was in farms and ranches, with about 18 percent under cultivation. More than half of the county's agricultural income that year was derived from livestock and the primary crops included sorghum, cotton, corn, wheat, and hay, although watermelons and pecans were also in production (Leffler 2020a).

Ten properties were identified as having a historically agricultural use. Only five of these were determined to still be used for agricultural purposes at the time of the survey. Although few buildings were identified as agricultural in use, several houses were identified as farmhouses or former farmhouses. Most extant agricultural resources in Refugio County date to the twentieth century. Most farms and ranches are clusters of resources at a hub or headquarters with their location largely dependent on the location of water. Few resources date to the nineteenth century for several reasons, including the many weather events that caused severe damage; the relatively low number of agricultural properties in the county at the time; the limited number and type of buildings and structures required for livestock ranching and their temporary lifespans if not maintained; the tendency to replace older resources with newer buildings and structures; and, where land is subdivided, the addition of newer homes on smaller parcels. However, nineteenth-century locations identified included 15 Texas Family Land Heritage Registry properties which have some extant historic-age resources. Extant pre-World War II rural houses have experienced additions or alterations, particularly to install indoor plumbing in kitchens and bathrooms and to upgrade living standards. In the decade immediately after World War II, agricultural buildings and resources were typically still constructed of wood, but by the late 1950s, metal became increasingly preferable and prefabricated buildings and structures became ubiquitous.

[Periods of Significance](#)

Representative and distinct elements of local agricultural history guided development of four discrete periods of significance for this context. The earliest period introduces livestock ranching and attendant subsistence farming from 1835 to 1846, when the earliest native-born Anglo American and foreign-born European immigrants settled in Refugio County and largely maintained local Tejano ranching and farming traditions. The period between 1846 and 1900 parallels antebellum and postbellum economic extremes and marked the development of early and varied transportation routes and nominal technological advancements. Between 1900 and 1942, local agricultural production recounts modestly higher cash-crop yields despite agricultural and economic depression, but new lows for livestock herds. The final period, from 1942 to 1973, considers an overall decline of all agricultural yields except cattle ranching.

[Areas of Significance](#)

Agriculture, Architecture, Engineering, Ethnic Heritage

Related Property Types

- Agricultural complexes: requisite domestic workspace and related buildings and structures, agricultural workspace with related buildings and structures, and various types of improved and unimproved lands, such as feed and cash croplands, terraces, pastures, orchards, fence lines, woodlands
- Agricultural buildings, structures, and objects: headquarters buildings, livestock barns/sheds (for horses, dairy cows, swine, or sheep/goats), storage barns/sheds, corncribs, silos, permanent troughs, coops/cotes/roosts, corrals/pens/chutes, dipping vats, livestock tanks, reservoirs, fences/gates, entry gates/posts/pylons, cattle guards
- Agricultural support resources: blacksmith shops, machine shops, granaries, dipping vats, irrigation systems, agricultural extension facilities, soil conservation district facilities, drainage district facilities, livestock feed lots/auction facilities, county fairgrounds
- Agricultural processing facilities: gristmills, syrup mills, cotton gins, stockyards, slaughterhouses, tanneries, shearing facilities, rice dryers, rice mills
- Domestic resources: single-family dwellings, multiple-family dwellings, multiple-worker dwellings
- Domestic ancillary buildings or structures: sheds, garages, hand- or machine-dug wells, well/pump houses, cisterns/stands, privies, windmills, cellars
- Domestic landscape features: kitchen gardens, ornamental yards, swept yards, fences/gates
- Funerary resources: cemeteries
- Transportation resources: livestock trails, ranch/farm interior roads, landing strips

SUBTHEME: COMMERCE

Initially, the economy of Refugio County (which included Aransas County until 1871) was largely based on the county's potential as a shipping port between Galveston and Veracruz, Mexico. During the early settlement period, economic activity was generally based on subsistence agriculture and the cattle, salt, cotton, and building materials markets. By the late 1850s, only about 1,000 people lived in the county. The population declined during the Civil War but rebounded in the following years as commercial centers developed in the newly established bayside settlements of Rockport and Fulton. These locales flourished during the great cattle boom of the 1860s and 1870s and a number of businesses devoted to packing, processing, and shipping cattle and beef products emerged. After Aransas split from Refugio County, and following the cattle boom, Refugio County remained engaged in cattle raising and also produced corn, cotton, hay, and fruits and vegetables for local and regional markets. Anchored by the central City of Refugio, other towns and settlements developed in the early twentieth century including Woodsboro, Tivoli, Bonnie View, Bayside, and Austwell.

The following historic context for commerce is focused on the commercial activities within the present-day boundaries of Refugio County. Although present-day Aransas County made up the eastern portion of Refugio County until 1871, commercial centers and development within that area are not included herein.

Pre-Railroad Commercial Development (1835-1905)

The town of Refugio was the center of commercial activity in the area that is now Refugio County as early as 1795, when the Nuestra Señora del Refugio Mission was established there. It was in operation until 1830, and by that time at least

100 Mexican ranchers lived on ranchos in the surrounding area, while a village had grown up around the mission site. Power and Hewetson, local empresarios, brought in Irish immigrants who settled around the ruins of the Nuestra Señora del Refugio in modern-day Refugio and joined the existing Tejano ranchers in agricultural pursuits. The Villa of Refugio was established the same year and became the center of the Refugio Municipality in 1834. The town was almost completely destroyed in the battle of Refugio in 1836 and the population remained very low until 1842 due to continuing threats of Mexican raids (Leffler 2020b; Long 2020a).

A post office was established in Refugio in 1847, but the ruins of the old mission remained the most prominent feature of the town through 1859. Modest buildings constructed by that time included three dry-goods stores, a boarding house, three churches, and two schools. The town declined once again during the Civil War, with only a few citizens remaining by the end of the war. The city's government had dissolved and remained unorganized until 1868, when Moses Simpson relocated from Copano to assume the role of town council on his own. By the late 1860s, saloons and gambling houses gave Refugio the reputation that it only attracted "gamblers, drifters, and criminals." The county seat was moved from Refugio to St. Mary's in 1869, and thereafter to Rockport, where it remained until Aransas County was established in 1871, at which time Refugio regained its status and the county government returned to town (Leffler 2020b).

One prominent early merchant establishment was the W. E. McCampbell and Bro. store, established in Refugio in 1867 by William and Thomas McCampbell. They opened a second establishment in St. Mary's in 1872. The brothers were general merchants and also exported wool, hides, and tallow by operating a caravan of oxcarts between St. Mary's, Refugio, and Goliad. The store remained in operation under various ownership following William's death, through the late-1890s (W. E. Campbell n.d.).

The town of Refugio began to thrive in the mid-1870s and became a marketing and shipping center for beef hides, wool, cotton, and livestock produced and raised on the farms in the surrounding area. By 1884, the town's population reached about 1,000 and the county had erected a wooden courthouse, three churches, and a public school. Without a railroad, however, Refugio was at a disadvantage compared to other major towns in the region, and it suffered a decline during the 1890s as a result. Its population dropped to around 800 by 1892 and about 600 by 1896. By 1900, it had rebounded to about 700 (Leffler 2020b).

The StLBMR began surveying the area in 1902. Local citizens organized to raise \$30,000 to pay a "bonus" to the railroad company to ensure that the route would not bypass the town; ultimately the town paid \$18,000 in cash and donated about half its common lands in exchange for a railroad connection. The tracks were laid by December of 1905 and a depot, no longer extant, was constructed at an unverified location "about a mile from the city." By that time, the town had "a convent, a hotel, two saloons, a blacksmith shop, about five stores, the wooden county courthouse and a 'handful of dwellings" (Leffler 2020b).

[Post-Railroad Commercial Development \(1905-1940\)](#)

A number of townsites were developed in the early twentieth century as a result of the arrival of the railroad. Woodsboro was developed just north of a siding on the StLBMR in 1906 and included a hotel, post office, cotton gin, lumber yard, and a school by 1908 (Leffler 2020c). Tivoli was established in 1907 in anticipation of the arrival of a branch of the railroad, which reached the town in 1912. It became a shipping center for cotton and other agricultural products

produced by farmers in the surrounding area. The town was home to two general stores, a bank, drugstore, blacksmith, and a hotel by 1914 (Long 2020b). Austwell was established in 1911, and the railroad terminated in the town. Most commercial endeavors are likely to have been centered on the trade of agricultural products as well as retail stores and services like barbers, blacksmiths, and other outfitters.

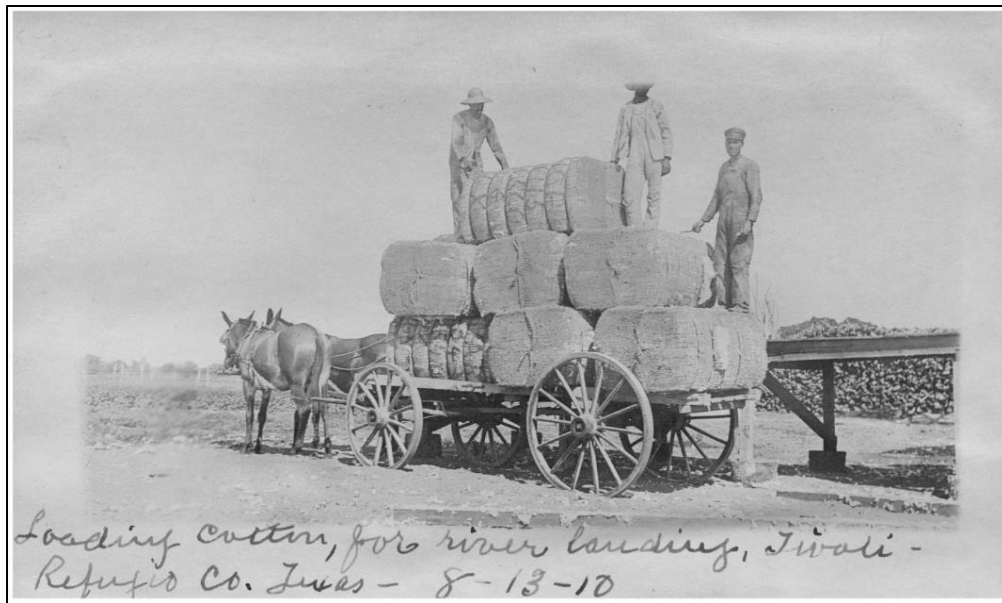


Figure 14: A 1910 photograph showing cotton loaded for transport at Tivoli (Mitchell 1910c).

Several commercial establishments were active in the railroad towns of Tivoli and Austwell. The Gisler Drug Store had establishments in each of the two towns as early as 1909. A.F. Daniels operated Oliver Tractors and Farm Implements and a Texaco Service Station in the area by 1935. The Austin-McDowell Company was a purveyor of general merchandise in Austwell and the O'Connor-Swift Company also sold general merchandise in Tivoli by 1935. J. Herrera owned a grocery store in Tivoli in operation in the mid-1930s, and C.N. Coward's Austwell store provided groceries, ice, fresh meats, and a café (J. L. Jones 1934).

[Post-Oil Commercial Development \(1926-1973\)](#)

The discovery of oil in the county in the late 1920s led to a boom in Refugio and other municipalities in the following years. The City of Refugio's population increased from 933 in 1925 to 2,019 in 1930. Sixty-five businesses had been established there by that time (Leffler 2020b). Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Refugio from 1935 reveal that these businesses included the Hotel Refugio, the First National Bank, a movie theater, a filling station, print shops, drug stores, laundry establishments, restaurants, grocers, offices, and warehouses (Sanborn Map Company 1935). Although no Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps covering other settlements in the county were identified, it is likely that similar establishments were present on a smaller scale in other municipalities.

[Periods of Significance](#)

Three distinct periods of significance were developed in association with this historic context. The era of Pre-Railroad Commercial Development spans from 1835 through 1905 and includes commercial development within the City of

Refugio and other developed areas, including rural crossroads towns and villages. The era of Post-Railroad Commercial Development spans from 1905, when the railroad first arrived in the county, through 1940, when automobile travel more notably displaced railroads as the primary mode of commercial transportation. This era includes commercial properties that were developed in anticipation of or after the arrival of railroads in the county. The Post-Oil Commercial Development era spans from 1926 through 1973 and accounts for resources constructed as a result of the discovery and growth of the oil and gas boom in the county during those years.

[Areas of Significance](#)

Commerce, Agriculture, Architecture, Engineering

[Related Property Types](#)

Commercial buildings from all periods of significance noted herein have the potential for significance under this theme. These would specifically include:

- Shops and retail establishments
- Restaurants, banks, and commercial services
- Hotels, motels, vacation cottages, and sportsman's clubs and lodges

SUBTHEME: INDUSTRY

The imprint of industrial development on Refugio County's landscape has changed markedly since the mid-nineteenth century. The first forms of industry were facilities that processed raw materials for mostly local use. The short-lived coastal port at St. Mary's provided opportunity for beef export to more-distant markets. Rather, beef raised throughout southeastern Texas was slaughtered and processed in nearby Fulton and Rockport (which were part of Refugio County until 1871) and live cattle was shipped by the steamships of the Morgan Lines to New Orleans from Rockport (Shukalo 2020). In the twentieth century, industrial improvements in Refugio County included agricultural processing centers, municipal utilities, and oil and gas extraction. Because tropical storms and hurricanes have ravaged the county, few nineteenth-and early twentieth-century industrial resources were extant.

[Early Industrial Development, 1860–1900](#)

Refugio County's primary industrial activity following the Civil War was centered on agricultural processing, primarily beef hides, tallow, and eventually, meat. The county had no returns for manufactured products in the 1860 census (U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office 1865). The 1870 census notes 13 manufacturers in Refugio County employing 87 men and two women and producing more than \$500,000 worth of goods (U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office 1872).

Agricultural Processing, 1900–1945

From the first decades of the twentieth century, agricultural processing complexes served cotton and grain farmers in Refugio County. Cotton gin complexes with a gin house, trash burners and hoppers, and storage were founded in towns and rural crossroads communities. Cotton gins were known to exist in several local communities beginning around the turn of the century, however, research to date has not uncovered the specific number, locations, or operators of the majority of these facilities. A cotton gin was in operation at Woodsboro by 1908, and another was at Bonnie View shortly thereafter (Huson 2020b; Leffler 2020c). By 1935 two gins were in operation in Tivoli (although at least one was in operation prior to 1910) – the Farmer’s Gin managed by Irvin Schultz, and the P. R. Austin Gin, owned and operated by the South Texas Cotton Oil Company (J. L. Jones 1934). The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1935 showed a cotton gin in the City of Refugio. Local grain processing facilities were located near railroad sidings and would have included corn silos and storage facilities. The few agricultural complexes extant have experienced alterations and new construction to preserve functionality.



Figure 15: 1910 photograph showing two men weighing and marking a bale of cotton in Tivoli (Mitchell 1910e).

Utilities, 1900–1973

The early twentieth century also brought the first municipal utilities—electricity, telephone, and water—to Refugio County; however, little information about these utilities has been uncovered by research to date. The town of Woodsboro is known to have been electrified in 1913, and the town’s first water works was established around that time (Leffler

2020c). In neighboring Calhoun County, local telephone service was the first successful utility in the county and, beginning in 1910, lines hung from cedar poles extended from Port Lavaca to Seadrift to Port O'Connor (Spiller 2008). Similar developments are likely to have occurred in populated areas of Refugio County in the same era. Municipal electricity and water were also established in many Refugio County locales in the early twentieth century, but details about the evolution of wastewater and municipal utilities in the county's communities were not identified through research. Major weather events throughout the century wreaked havoc to these above-ground resources and they required regular replacement or repair.

Petrochemical Industry, 1925–1973

Local lore says that oil was first discovered in the county around 1870 during the digging of a water well near St. Mary's, however, explorations for oil did not begin in earnest until the 1910s. The Houston Gulf Company completed a gas pipeline through the county around 1926 and significant production began around that time (Leffler 2020a). By 1927, natural gas production in the region passed four billion cubic feet a day. The Humble Oil Company built a small refinery at Ingleside, and many small plants opened in Corpus Christi, Refugio, and Port Lavaca during the 1930s (Olien n.d.). By that time, several minor oilfields were in operation.

In 1928, the Greta oilfield was opened, demonstrating "the tremendous potential for oil production in the area" (Leffler 2020a). Although the county lost more than 20% of its farms during the Great Depression, the continued development of the petroleum and gas industry helped to sustain the local economy. By 1943 at least 11 distinct oil fields had been discovered and production continued to increase through the 1940s (Leffler 2020a). Nearly 25,000,000 barrels of petroleum were produced in the area in 1944, and production approached 30,240,000 barrels in 1948 (Leffler 2020a). The city declined, however, in the late 1960s and early 1970s as petroleum production in the area began to decrease (Leffler 2020b).

These oil fields typically had pump units with related separators, metering stations, and storage tanks linked to pipelines. Larger operations have pump houses or stations, power or boiler houses, and refinery facilities or natural gas casinghead, cycling, or injection plants (Dase 2003).

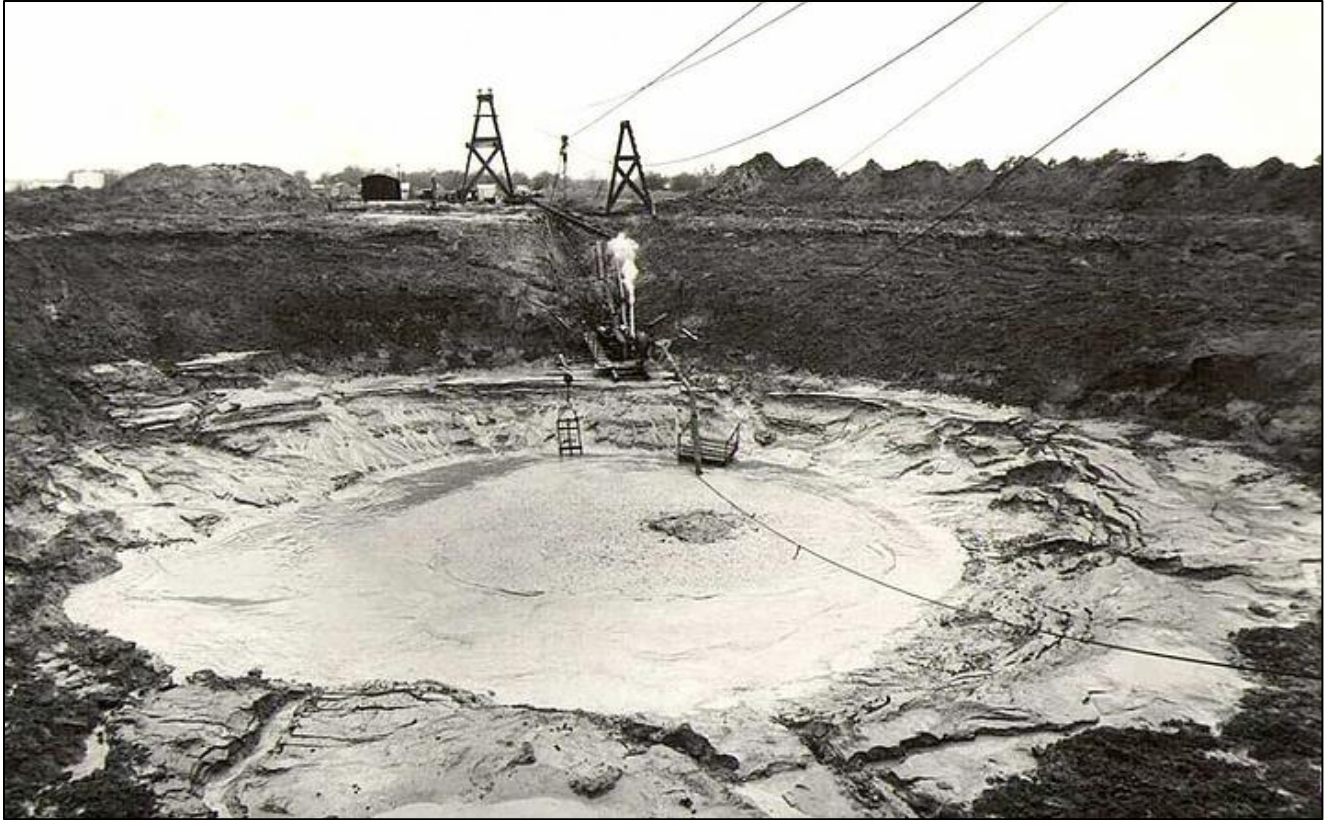


Figure 16: This 1936 photograph shows a gas well blowout that occurred in the Greta Oil Field that year (Shellman 2019).

Extant industrial resources in Refugio County date to the twentieth century. Industrial complexes will be along main roads and the railroad right-of-way and may have modern resources and equipment on the premises with older buildings and structures no longer in use or functioning as storage rather than as processing facilities. Because municipal utilities have been regularly upended by weather events, they are in altered conditions. Because of their later construction dates, many buildings and structures associated with dredging, oil and natural gas, and petrochemical manufacturing survive.

[Periods of Significance](#)

Representative and distinct elements of local industrial history guided development of four discrete periods of significance for this context. The earliest period, 1860 to 1900, accommodates the possibility of extant nineteenth-century industrial resources. Improved industrial resources centered on agricultural processing are covered in the period spanning 1900 through 1945. Municipal utility improvements occurred between 1900 and 1973. Later periods of significance account for resources constructed in association with the petrochemical industry, from 1925 to 1973.

[Areas of Significance](#)

Architecture, Engineering, Industry

Related Property Types

- Industrial complexes: extractive, manufacturing, and/or processing facilities with collections of requisite resources plus associated storage resources, transportation resources, office buildings, parking lots
- Extractive facilities: derricks, drill rigs, pump houses, pump stations, pump units, power/boiler houses, separators, metering stations, office buildings, warehouses, parking lots
- Processing facilities: food processing/packing, grain elevators, cotton gins/houses/compresses, cotton seed oil mills, trash burners and hoppers, storage resources, office buildings, office buildings, warehouses, parking lots
- Manufacturing facilities: mills, shipyards, factories, refineries, natural gas plants (casinghead, cycling, and injection), power/boiler houses, office buildings, warehouses, parking lots
- Waterworks resources: filtration plants, sewage treatment plants, reservoirs, water towers, dams, pump houses, ice plants, warehouses
- Energy facilities: generating plants, substations, transmission lines, windmills, turbines, office buildings, warehouses
- Communications facilities: exchange offices, pole lines
- Storage resources: bulk terminal plants, tanks, tank farms, grain storage bins, cotton houses, seed storage houses/bins, warehouses
- Transportation resources: pipelines (fountain heads and gathering, trunk, and natural gas lines), railroad sidings, wharves

THEME: ETHNIC HERITAGE

The historical ethnic makeup of Refugio County encompasses several bands of Native Americans, Europeans, Latinos, and African Americans. The native population occupied the territory in both prehistoric and historic periods. Archaeological artifacts recovered in Refugio County and the surrounding areas suggest that the land has been the site of human habitation for several thousand years. Artifacts from a culture known as Aransas have been located and dated to approximately 4,000 years ago. The Aransas Indians, a nomadic hunter-gatherer people are believed to have left the Gulf Coast between 1200 and 1300 AD. During the historic period, the area was occupied by several groups of Native Americans including the Karankawas and Coahuiltecas. Most of these groups were forced from the area or succumbed to disease following the arrival of Europeans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Long 2020a).

Spanish explorers visited the region in the first quarter of the sixteenth century but did not make any settlements in the area. In 1695, the French established a colony in Texas and dispatched an expedition to the area in 1689, but again no settlement was established. In 1766, Diego Ortiz Parrilla named what is now Copano Bay "Santo Domingo," and named what is now St. Joseph Island "Culebra Island." By the late colonial period, the Spanish established a port, a mission, and a fort in the Aransas County vicinity between about 1780 and 1810. Several attempts to establish settlements in the general area were unsuccessful primarily due to the threat of Indian attacks and the distance from other Spanish enclaves (Long 2020a). Europeans and Mexicans settled the area from the early eighteenth century and continued to arrive throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Black slaves were generally brought to the county by slave owners who migrated to the area from the American South in the period preceding the Civil War (Long 2020a).

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans came to Texas in large numbers. Many fled their Old-World countries as a result of political, religious, or economic difficulties. Publications produced as early as the 1830s and through the 1850s lured foreign-born immigrants to Texas in search of a better life (Dase et al. 2010, 21).

After Mexican independence in 1821, Irish immigrants James Power and James Hewetson received empresario grants encompassing the majority of the area with rights to the ruins of the old mission Nuestra Señora del Refugio and surrounding town, which was at the mouth of the Guadalupe River in present-day Refugio County (Leffler 2020a). Throughout the settlement period, Irish immigrants came to Texas and served as interim governors (Hugo Oconór) and as Catholic emissaries (Father Michael Muldoon and Father Juan Agustín Morfi). Refugio proved to be one of the most popular destinations for Irish immigrants. The Mexican government viewed the Irish Catholics of Refugio as a pleasant buffer between the Catholic Mexican settlements and the protestant Anglos settling elsewhere in the state. This view of the Irish was dramatically altered when the Irish immigrants and their descendants sided with the Texans during the fight for Texan independence (Institute of Texan Culture 2019). The majority of the 350 Irish settlers that Power brought over from Ireland were from Ballygarrett Parish in County Wexford, attracted to Texas by the opportunity of landownership. An outbreak of cholera killed many after their arrival, and many of the survivors joined colonists from Mexico and moved to the abandoned Refugio Mission, which served as the center of operations for the colony (Handbook of Texas Online 2020).

After the annexation of Texas by the United States, new settlers poured in. A census conducted by the State of Texas in 1847 reported the population of Refugio County as 142,009. The first United States Census taken in Texas in 1850

enumerated 212,592 residents but did not count the Native American population. Immigrants arriving to the Gulf Coast through entry ports in Galveston, Indianola, and Nacogdoches were primarily from the lower south. Numerous foreign-born European immigrants, particularly Germans, also entered through these ports during the late 1840s (R. B. Campbell 2021).

Slavery evolved in southeastern Texas much as it did through the south. The majority of Texas's White inhabitants had been natives of the South and brought the traditions of their home states with them as they settled the eastern timberlands and southern central plains. They ultimately turned to the production of cotton as a cash crop, cementing the need for slave labor on the frontier. By 1846, Texas had more than 30,000 Black slaves and produced a considerable amount of cotton (R. B. Campbell 2021). Given its overall low population, Refugio County had few slaves. By 1850 eight enslavers held a total of 19 enslaved persons in rural Refugio County and by 1860 that number had risen to 234 enslaved persons held by 61 enslavers (U.S. Census Bureau 1850; Leffler 2020a). The US Census data for 1870 on Refugio County shows roughly the same number of free Black persons as enslaved Black persons in the previous decade, generally indicating that the freedmen population largely remained in the region following Emancipation, at least in the short term.

Lacking cash and land, many freed families lived in log houses that were easy and inexpensive to build, upgrading in later years as their finances allowed. Most freedmen were trained in agriculture and turned to sharecropping or leasing land to farm (Dase et al. 2010, 32).



Figure 17: An undated mid-twentieth century image of the Bethlehem Baptist Church, located in Refugio County (Texas Historical Commission Unknown).

Numerous freedmen communities were established in the South in the 1870s and 1880s, and many survived into the twentieth century when “Jim Crow” laws forced segregation. Sometimes referred to in modern times as “Freedom Colonies,” these small enclaves typically included homes clustered around community resources like a church, school, lodge-hall, and perhaps a store. Given the difficulties in establishing financial security in the decades following emancipation, these communities were typically located on less desirable lands, far from main roads and resources or near railroad tracks (Dase 2003, 32). Freedmen communities were located in Refugio, the Blackjacks, Lewis’s (or Lew’s) Bend, Sprigg’s Bend, and Robinson’s Bend, described in Sitton and Conrad’s *Freedom Colonies* as follows:

In south-central Texas, plantation owner Seabourne Lewis and other landowners allowed their former bondsmen to move into the wooded wilderness of the nearby San Antonio River bottoms and establish a line of squatter communities that lasted until World War II. Lew’s Bend, Sprigg’s Bend, and others sprang up – a riverside freedmen’s district collectively known as “The Bends.” Subject to floods, the San Antonio River bottom had been left in heavy woods and uncultivated by Lewis. From time to time, the San Antonio River flooded the bottom and people rode out on wagons through the backwater. Then the river went down, and people drove wagons back in and cleaned up, scraping alluvial mud from their house floors with cotton hoes.

[...]

Eugene Tillman had been born at Lewis's Bend in 1902. Of the first settlers, he noted:

"They farmed along the river. Pecans, peaches, and grapes were everywhere. There were hackberries, mulberries, and anaqua. The ground had wild greens and wild onions and chinquapins.... The river was important, you see... When these people come in here to settle, they had to be near water.... Lewis's Bend was a crossin' [sic.] spot.... We never used a doctor in that river bottom. We used lots of natural medicines and herbs" (Sitton and Conrad 2012, 25).

In addition to subsistence farming, residents of Lewis's Bend found employment in the county "as cowboys, cooks, fence builders, and hay hands on nearby cattle ranches" (Sitton and Conrad 2012, 152).

Aggregate population census data from 1850 for Refugio County reveals a total population of only 288. Of those 288, 19 were enslaved Black people and the remainder were White and of both European and domestic origin (US Census Bureau 1850). By 1860, the population increased to 1,600, made up of 1,212 White residents, 6 free Black residents, 148 "Indians," and 234 enslaved Black people. In 1870 Refugio County had a total population of 2,324 which included 2,078 White and 246 Black citizens (US Census Bureau 1870). By 1880, Refugio County had a total population of 1,585, comprised of 1,249 White and 336 Black people. No persons of Asian or Native American origin were enumerated (US Census Bureau Administration and Customer Services Division 1880, 410).

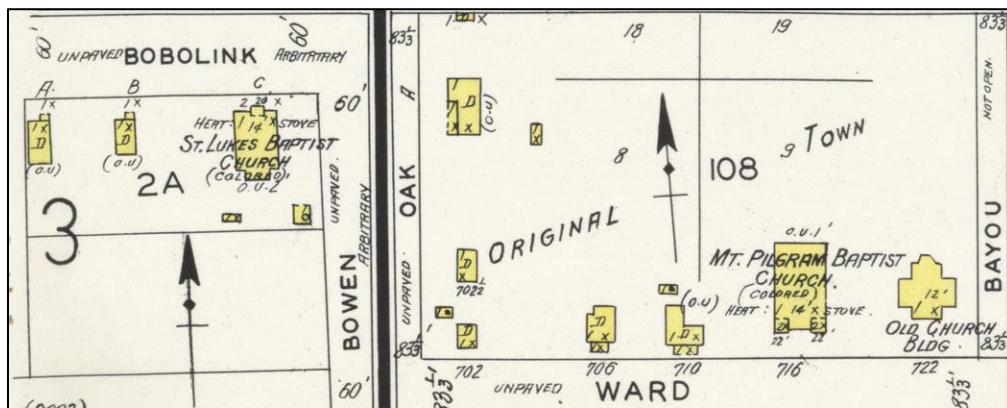


Figure 18: The 1935 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Refugio noted two "colored" churches in the northeastern part of town (Sanborn Map Company 1935).

Aggregate population census data from 1880 also reveals that the majority of Refugio County residents – 832 out of 966 – were native-born. Of the native-born population, most (1080) were born in Texas, while large numbers came from Louisiana, Kentucky, Alabama, and Mississippi. Others came from Georgia, Missouri, Arkansas, and Virginia. The non-native-born population numbered only 175. Of those, 144 came from Mexico, and 33 from Ireland. The remaining 21 came from British-American territories, Scotland, France, Sweden, Germany, England, and Austria (US Census Bureau Administration and Customer Services Division 1880, 530).

By 1871, Mexican nationals (those with Spanish and indigenous cultural roots) and their descendants outnumbered all other non-native ethnic groups. Mexican nationals and their descendants have had a notable impact on southeastern Texas due to their relatively large numbers and their retention of cultural traditions (Dase et al. 2010, 25). Almost all of the Mexican Americans of Refugio County were rancheros or employed in the related packing and processing industries. In the 1870s, the majority of Mexican Americans in the county "were driven out through violence or through intimidating

threats against their lives” following the murder of a local White rancher, Thadeous “Thad” Swift, and his wife, Frances Irene Barlow Swift, in 1874. White vigilante groups terrorized the local Mexican American population and “practically every Mexican of the laboring class was regarded as a suspect.” Local Mexican American ranch owners Francisco and Marcello Moya were murdered by a group of vigilantes, and other Mexican Americans were taken to the Refugio jail for questioning. At least three were lynched by mobs thereafter. As a result, according to Judge W. L. Rea, “the roads of the county were lined with ox-carts and wagons headed west,” as the Mexican American population fled the violence. Another White rancher was murdered less than a year later, exacerbating racial hostilities and causing “virtually all of the original colonial Mexican families in the county” to leave the area. By the early twentieth century, only a handful of Mexican Americans owned land in the county (Leffler 2020a).

The remaining Mexican Americans were generally segregated from the white population. In neighboring Aransas County, Mexican Americans formed private clubs to support their communities, including the Blue Cross Lodge in Rockport. An oral history included in Allen and Taylor’s Aransas County history described it as follows:

Most every Mexican belonged to the lodge. The head of the family would pay a fee and then whenever someone got sick, the lodge would help out with medicine and doctors and things like that. Once in a while, they made dances and fiestas to support the lodge (Allen and Taylor 1997, 282).

A number of such groups dedicated to improving the lives of Mexican Americans joined together to form the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC, originally called the United Latin American Citizens) in Corpus Christi in 1929 (Allen and Taylor 1997, 282). LULAC is the oldest and largest continually active Latino political association in the United States and was the first nationwide Mexican American civil rights organization (Orozco 2021). By 2014, 7,302 people lived in the county. Approximately 43.5 percent were Anglo, 6.8 percent African American, and 48.7 percent Hispanic (Leffler 2020a).

Census data from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not distinguish the Hispanic, Latino, or Mexican American populations in the census records. Other races were also neglected in early records; however, this is likely due to a lack of racial presence. Early records, approximately 1850-1880, include population information for White, Black, Chinese, and Indian populations. From approximately 1900-1920, records included White and Black populations calling out foreign born and native-born White residents also indicating if their parents were foreign or native born. Around 1910 records began to include Indian and Chinese populations again but also included Japanese, Filipino, Hindu, Korean, and Hawaiian residents. Generally speaking, census data relating to Hispanic, Latino, and Mexican American populations are provided for the state of Texas and larger cities rather than by county.

The table below provides known demographics for Refugio County from 1850-2020. Early records which do not provide more detailed racial distributions likely included Hispanic populations among the racial group “White”. For the Black/African American demographic, earlier records referred to this racial classification by terms including “Colored” and “Negro” which are indicated below. All numbers are from the United States Census Bureau.

Table 9. US Census Data Showing Changes in the Racial Makeup of Refugio County.

Year	1850	1860	1870	1880	1910	1930	1940	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
White	269	1,212	2,078	1,249	2,333	6,841	9,276	8,524	7,300	6,280	5,943	2,864
Hispanic or Latino	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	3,490	3,487	3,306
Black or African American	19 ("Colored")	240 ("Colored")	246 ("Colored")	336 ("Colored")	481 ("Negro")	849 ("Negro")	1,101 ("Negro")	779	618	530	483	400
Native American/Alaskan/Hawaiian	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	48	42	18
Asian	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	23	33	27
Mixed Race/Other	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	5	16	15	947	882	126
Total:	288	1,600	2,324	1,585	2,814	7,691	10,383	9,320	7,933	7,828	7,383	

US Census Bureau, Census of 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1910, 1930, 1940, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020.

PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Two distinct periods of significance were developed for this context based on the development of the local communities within Refugio County. The first period spans 1830 through 1864 and accounts for ethnically associated historic resources from the county's early settlement era through the Civil War. The second period spans 1865 through 1965, covering Emancipation, post-Civil War growth, and the Jim Crow era.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Ethnic History, Social History, Architecture, Agriculture

RELATED PROPERTY TYPES

Most property types have the potential for eligibility under this context where association with particular ethnic groups is known. Specific types include

- Churches
- Schools
- Cemeteries

- Private dwellings and homesteads
- Clubs, clubhouses, and meeting spaces
- Commercial buildings and stores, warehouses, processing facilities

THEME: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The following historic context for public and private institutional development encompasses five subthemes: Educational Development; Government; Conservation; Recreation, Culture, and Leisure; and Transportation.

SUBTHEME: EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In Spanish Texas, education was designed to Christianize and assimilate the native population, as well as to provide basic knowledge to the children of garrison troops and Spanish colonists. Mission schools established for the native population taught Christianity and the Spanish language. A non-mission private school was established in San Antonio during the Spanish colonial period but was short-lived. A public school was established in the city sometime after 1812, but funding was precarious, and the school did not endure. A number of factors resulted in the Spanish government's failure to establish general education including frontier conditions, sparse population, as well as local poverty and lack of financial support (Berger and Wilborn 2021).

The Mexican Texas Government failed to establish a system of public education, and Constitution of the Republic of Texas sought to rectify the deficiency by directing Congress to provide one. Several private schools were chartered in the early years, but public education was slow to develop. In 1838, Mirabeau Lamar requested Congress establish and endow an education system, resulting in the passing of bills in 1839 and 1840 that adopted a public-school plan for primary through university education, delegated to the counties. Each county was granted land endowments to support local schools. Many counties were indifferent to schools; by 1855, 38 counties had not even surveyed their land allotments. Private schools and academies were prevalent in the years prior to the Texas Revolution and continued to operate as part of the republic, however, several institutions of higher education were chartered during the period (Berger and Wilborn 2021). Although provision was made for public education, no evidence has been found in public records of schools in Refugio County during the era of the Republic (1836-1846) (Hobart 1955; TXGenWeb 2021b).

After annexation, the state provided for the establishment of free schools under the Constitution of 1845, which stipulated that one-tenth of the state's annual taxation revenue be set aside as a perpetual fund to support schools. A school law enacted in 1854 provided the framework for the school system. It required the establishment of common schools and provided a system to cover tuition for impoverished and orphaned children. It also allowed private schools to be converted to common schools. The law also set aside 20% of the \$10 million received by Texas from the sale of lands to the United States for the Permanent School Fund (Berger and Wilborn 2021). Under the new legislation, Refugio County established a public school system which was in place from 1854 through 1866. It was based on the Act of 1854, which required the establishment of "convenient school districts" and the election of three trustees per district. Trustees were required to select a chairman and location for the school house in each district (Hobart 1955; TXGenWeb 2021b). Prior to the Act of 1854, there were two recorded schools in the county (Leffler 2021a).

After the Civil War, the Texas Constitution of 1866 provided for the education of African Americans through taxation of their property. Although the Freedmen's Bureau brought teachers from the north to teach in Black schools, the early African American schools remained controversial, and students and teachers suffered from both discrimination and intimidation. The Texas Constitution of 1869 eliminated the separation of Black and White taxation for schools and reaffirmed provisions for funding public education. It directed the legislature to set aside a quarter of the general revenue

for public schools and utilize all money from the sale of public land to fund schools. In 1871 a bill enacted by Governor Davis established a state board of education which consisted of the governor, attorney general, and the superintendent of public education (Berger and Wilborn 2021).

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, private and church schools played important roles in education. As some Texans disapproved of state involvement in education, private and church schools were the only options in some locales (Berger and Wilborn 2021). A state-wide count of 678 schools in 1887 likely underestimated “the true extent of Black education in Texas,” as a good deal of Black instruction was conducted informally within religious congregations which, “by the 1870s were beginning to leave private homes and brush arbors to establish log churches” (Sitton and Conrad 2012, 110). Sitton and Conrad described this arrangement in their treatise “Freedom Colonies: Independent Black Texans in the Time of Jim Crow” as follows:

At Lewis’s Bend in Refugio County, for example, as one former resident reported: “the schoolhouse was the church house, and the church house was the schoolhouse. We went to school in the daytime and church on Sunday.” His community’s Mount Zion Baptist Church served multiple purposes (Sitton and Conrad 2012).

By 1890, there were “a parochial school” and “two public schools (one for White students and one for Black students)” in the City of Refugio (Leffler 2021b). The Scholastic Census Report of Refugio County, taken by the Assessor of Taxes in 1894 enumerated 339 scholastic-age children who were entitled to the benefits of the Public School Fund for that year. Refugio County had five “colored” schools by that time, with a total enrollment of 95 students: Refugio, St. Mary’s, Medio, Brayville, and “Col. Schl. No. 2” (TXGenWeb 2021a).

The first African American school in Refugio was “held in a shotgun building on the corner of Santiago and Osage Streets.” The building had no running water, so schoolboys “carried water from Osage Street for drinking purposes.” The students were also responsible for maintenance of the building, as well as for sourcing and cutting firewood to heat the building during the winter months. The school was known as the “Refugio Colored School”, and it later relocated to the corner of Alamo and King Streets. The building burned in 1927, and thereafter Professor A.T. Barefield arranged for classes to be held at alternate locations – first, the Bob Button Dance Hall, and then at Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church. (Texas Historical Commission 2013).

By 1900, the county had a number of schools “operating under strict segregation guidelines.” Schools for White students were located in Refugio, St. Mary’s, Westville, Morrowville, Tivoli, and Hynes Bay, while schools for Black students were located in Refugio, St. Mary’s, Medio, and Hynes Bay. A total of 269 students were enrolled in county schools that year (Leffler 2020a).

The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide of 1904 described Refugio County schools:

Free schools are established in various parts of the county and have a scholastic population of 434. The schools have an average term of about five months (Texas Almanac 2020, 351).

By 1910, the publication reported that there were four established schools in the county (A. H. Belo & Company 1910). A statewide scholastic census conducted in that year recorded 625,917 children (501,806 White and 124,111 Black) attending school in county districts, and an additional 342,552 children (272,075 White and 70,277 Black) in independent

school districts throughout Texas. Many of the rural schools consisted of one-room schoolhouses with a single teacher instructing multiple grade levels (Berger and Wilborn 2021).

In 1915, a four-story brick school building was constructed in Austwell (it eventually became the Austwell School). The Austwell School became accredited in 1916 and served the Austwell-Tivoli community, although sources note that “Many Refugio County residents sent their children to the Austwell School due to its reputation in the community. After graduation, entrance into college was assured” (Mixerr Reviews 2017). The 1915 building was destroyed in a storm in 1954 and replaced in 1956. The new school became Austwell Elementary School and served grades K-8. The building was expanded in 1958 with an 8-classroom addition (Mixerr Reviews 2017).

Bayside citizens erected their own schoolhouse, a wooden building, in 1912. The school consolidated with the Woodsboro Independent School District in 1946 (Benowitz 2021a). The Refugio County School Board erected a school building in Bonnie View in 1922 at a cost of \$30,000. Beeville architect W. C. Stephens designed the building. The land upon which it stood became a county park in 1972 (Conway Publications 1922; Mixerr Reviews 2020).

The Better Schools Amendment of 1920 allowed an increase in local taxation for education. The law was designed to ease the state’s burden of financing schools; however, many counties were slow to increase their funding. Financial inequality from area to area led to inadequate funds and subpar facilities in some locales. These challenges resulted in poor quality schools for students in rural, sparsely populated counties as well as in areas with high Black and Mexican American populations. In 1930, the legal case of *Del Rio Independent School District v. Salvatierra* attempted to show the inferior quality of educational facilities for Mexican Americans. Although the plaintiff, Jesús Salvatierra, lost, the case helped launch a movement against segregated schools. In 1948, a district judge ruled against the segregation of Mexican American children within the public school system in the case of *Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District*. The Gilmer-Aikin Laws, passed in 1949, sought to raise the general level of school standards and to eliminate inequalities by increasing of teacher salaries and establishing the Texas Education Agency (Berger and Wilborn 2021).

Julius Rosenwald, president of the Sears Roebuck Company, began providing matching funding for African American schools in the South in 1917. One of these “Rosenwald Schools” was erected in Refugio in 1929. The building was a two-room stuccoed structure on East Commons Street. It was named the Barefield School after local processor A.T. Barefield, who was an educator in Refugio from 1902 to 1949 and promoted “education and good citizenship within the Black community.” As attendance grew, a two-room building was moved from the White school to the Barefield School grounds about 1933. This addition still stands at the intersection of Commons and Bayou Street, but the original Rosenwald school building is no longer extant (Texas Historical Commission 2013). The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Refugio for 1935 showed five schools in the city at that time. These included a “Mexican Public School” located at Osage and Santiago Streets, a “Colored School” located on Commons Avenue at Bayou Street, a “High and Ward School” at Commons and Alamo, the Refugio Public School, and the Mercy Academy Roman Catholic School (Figure 19) (Sanborn Map Company 1935).

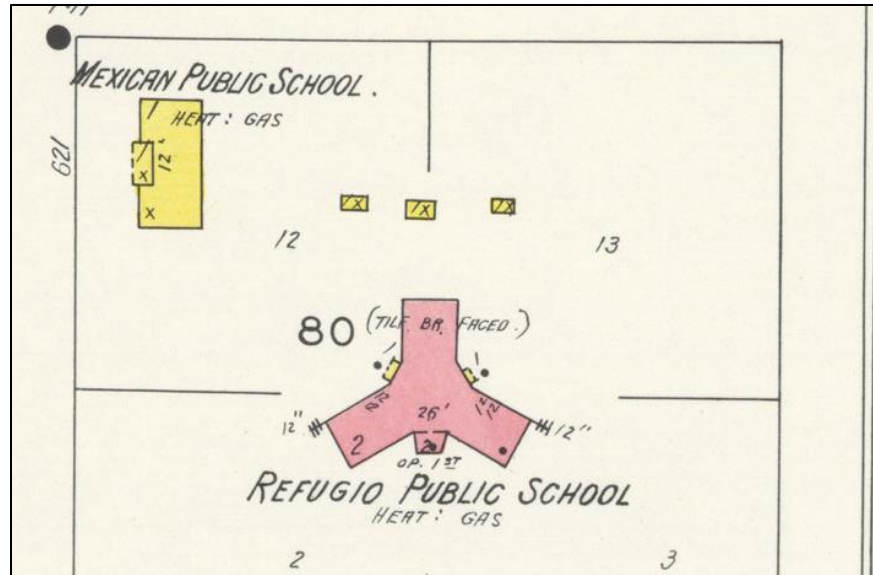


Figure 19: The 1935 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Refugio depicted the "Mexican Public School" located on the grounds of the Refugio Public School near the center of town (Sanborn Map Company 1935).

Up until 1950, schools were segregated under the "separate but equal" doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). *Sweatt v. Painter* laid the foundation for integration in schools, and the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 compelled schools to end segregation. Although many discriminatory practices continued, school districts across the state began to implement integration (Berger and Wilborn 2021). San Antonio and Corpus Christi adopted immediate, across-the-board integration in the 1955-56 school year. Refugio integrated in the late 1950s (Jacobus 2019; McDaniel 1959; Scamardo 2019). The City of Refugio executed an extended school construction program in the 1950s alongside other public utilities improvements.



Figure 20: A 1991 photograph of Refugio Middle School (Texas Historical Commission 1991).

In the 1970 case of *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District*, the desegregation decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* was extended to Mexican Americans, for whom integration had not been universal (Berger and Wilborn 2021). In the same year, a federal judge ordered the integration of all Texas schools in *United States v. Texas*. This changed school district boundaries and increased bussing to enforce integration. In 1973 the state legislature enacted the Bilingual Education and Training Act, which mandated bilingual instruction for all Texas elementary public schools that had 20 or more children with limited English-speaking skills. During the 1970s, the scholastic population rose, and the cost of education increased. Small school districts were consolidated into larger districts in an effort to control costs and provide equal opportunities (Berger and Wilborn 2021).

Presently, Refugio County has three school districts: the Refugio Independent School District, the Woodsboro Independent School District, and the Austwell-Tivoli Independent School District. The Austwell-Tivoli Independent School District serves Tivoli, Austwell, and eastern portions of Refugio County in two schools: Austwell-Tivoli Elementary School (grades PK-6) and Austwell-Tivoli High School (grades 7-12). The Refugio Independent School District serves the town of Refugio as well as portions of Bee and Victoria Counties in two schools: Stricklin Elementary School (grades K-6) and Refugio High School (grades 7-12). The Woodsboro Independent School District is based in Woodsboro and also serves Bayside in two schools: Woodsboro Elementary School (grades PK-6) and Woodsboro Junior/Senior High (grades 7-12).

[Periods of Significance](#)

Three periods of significance were developed for this context based on the development of schools in Refugio County. The early education era spans from 1830 to 1920 and accounts for historic resources from the county's early settlement era through the 1920 Better Schools Amendment, after which additional funding became available to local schools through changes in taxation. The second period of significance begins in 1920 and runs through 1955 and encompasses

resources that were constructed as local communities began to improve school resources within the county through the legal end of school segregation. The post-segregation era (1955–1973) includes resources built to accommodate integrated schools and the county’s post-war growth and extends to the survey cutoff date of 1973.

[Areas of Significance](#)

Architecture, Education, Ethnic History, Social History

[Related Property Types](#)

- Public school buildings
- Private school buildings
- Religious school buildings, churches

SUBTHEME: GOVERNMENT

The area that would become Refugio County was first organized as the Mexican municipality of Refugio. The county was named for the Mission “Our Lady of Refuge” which was located in the present-day City of Refugio. According to the laws of Mexican colonization, the town of Refugio was granted a foursquare league for a town, with a “town proper” at the center and “town commons” in the surrounding area. The town proper was planned to include a central plaza or “constitutional square” for government and military buildings on the west side and a church and school located on the east side. The town commons were to be divided into farming lots and sold for development. James Bray surveyed the lots for the town in 1834 and laid out 49 blocks surrounding a central square (Houston-Floyd 2002). The town of Refugio lies in the center of present-day Refugio County and has been its center of government for the majority of its history since.

[Early Development \(1830-1900\)](#)

Refugio County was formed as one of the thirteen original counties of the Republic of Texas after independence in 1836. The county’s original boundaries included present-day Goliad County until 1841; Calhoun, San Patricio, and Victoria Counties until 1846; parts of Bee county until 1857; Aransas County until 1871; and parts of Nueces County until 1878 (Leffler 2020a). The town of Refugio was incorporated in 1837 and became the county seat, although its government remained unorganized, and the population dwindled significantly due to the threat of Mexican raids in the area. It had no government until 1842, when the town was reincorporated and settlers began to return to the area, and no post office until 1847 (Leffler 2020b).

The City of Refugio constructed a courthouse in the town of Refugio in 1850. It was a two-story shellcrete building sited on the block on the west side of the town square. The city deeded the unfinished building to the county in 1856, at which time it was completed. Work included plastering the walls and installing wooden floorboards (Houston-Floyd 2002).

While the coastal areas of the county found prosperity, the town of Refugio grew slowly, and the ruins of the old mission remained the most prominent feature through 1859. By that time the town included three dry-goods stores, a boarding house, three churches, and two schools. The town declined during the Civil War, and its population dwindled to only a few residents by the war's end. The city council dissolved in 1861 and the government was not reestablished until 1868. By that time the town had been "reduced to a few private homes, a dilapidated concrete courthouse, a hotel, the McCampbell Brothers Store, and a wooden Masonic building" (Leffler 2021a). In 1869, the Refugio County seat was briefly moved from Refugio to St. Mary's of Aransas and then to Rockport. It remained in Rockport until Aransas was split from Refugio County in 1871. At that time, Refugio reclaimed its status as Refugio county seat (Leffler 2020b).

By 1865, the county clerk had deemed the shellcrete courthouse "unfit as a place for safe storage of the court records and began to store the records at his home, with the support of the commissioners. Major repairs to the building were undertaken, but ultimately, a new courthouse was constructed in the mid-1870s. It caught fire and burned in 1879, and was replaced in 1880 (Texas Historical Commission 1994; Houston-Floyd 2002).

Twentieth Century Development (1900-1973)

In December 1915, the 1880 courthouse caught fire and the county again needed a new building (Houston-Floyd 2002). In September 1916, county commissioners hired San Antonio architect Atlee B. Ayres to design the new building and in 1917, they hired local contractor W.H. Borglud to build it. Oil and natural gas were discovered in the county in the 1920s, leading to a boom in population and business activity in the county. The county expanded its courthouse in the 1950s with the addition of north and south wings. The county courthouse has functioned as the primary government center for Refugio throughout its existence (Houston-Floyd 2002; Texas Historical Commission 1994).



Figure 21: Early twentieth century photograph of the 1917 Refugio County Courthouse ("120 Refugio County" n.d.).



Figure 22: Mid-twentieth century photograph of the 1917 Refugio County Courthouse with 1950s wing additions and other alterations by architect Irving Dunbar ("120 Refugio County" n.d.).

The boom following the 1920s discovery of oil in the county led to rapid development in the city. By 1925, Refugio had a population of 933. That number jumped to 2,019 by 1930. The city developed a water and sewer system in that year, and also constructed a new town hall building. The city's main streets were paved by 1935, and by 1941 the town's population reached 4,077. It was now a modern city, with paved streets, a sewer system, and a new hospital (Leffler 2020b).

In 1940, Refugio County was one of the first areas in the US to respond to the Nazi threat, raising a regiment of volunteers before World War II even started. Leffler described the response in his entry on Refugio County as follows:

In May 1940 as Adolf Hitler's Wermacht rolled through the Low Countries, American Legionnaires in Refugio County took action intended to alert Americans to the Nazi threat. In a public statement announcing the formation of a home guard unit, the Legionnaires declared: "If the United States will not put itself in a state of preparedness, then Refugio County will as a protest and as an example." Responding to the call, the men of the county enlisted in such large numbers that a regimental structure was required. Allen Driscoll Rooke was appointed "colonel and commander-in-chief." Reflecting the Irish roots of many of the men, the unit was named the Royal Irish Regiment of Refugio County. The group adopted a uniform that included khaki trousers and shirt, a khaki overseas cap piped in "shamrock" green, a web belt, and a black tie. Each man paid for his own

uniform. The companies met each week on Tuesday and Thursday nights for drills until December 1940, when the unit was incorporated into the Texas Defense Guard (Leffler 2021a).

After the war, the City of Refugio continued to grow. Around 100 new houses were built in subdivisions around the city between 1946 and 1949. By 1950, the population reached 4,680. Proceeds from the area's oil wealth funded modernization of the city's water and sewage systems in the 1950s, and the city initiated an extensive school construction program. By 1960, the population reached 4,944 and 115 businesses were active in the city. By 1966, the city's population peaked at 5,000 but began to decline by the late 1960s through the early 1970s as local petroleum production declined. By 1970 the population was 4,340 (Leffler 2020b).

Federal Public Works (1930-1973)

The federal government undertook a number of public works projects in the county beginning in the 1930s.

Refugio Hospital

The Works Progress Administration granted \$71,325 to Refugio County for construction of the Refugio Hospital in the mid-1930s. The County matched the grant with \$87,175 of county bond money for the hospital project for a total of \$158,500 (Living New Deal 2019; Victoria Advocate 1938). The building was designed by local architect Irving H. Dunbar, and its architecture was described as follows:

Although Dunbar's city hall was his most publicized building, his most outstanding public building is this three-story hospital, a sober, symmetrically composed institutional building enlivened with fluted Art Deco piers and pilasters and copious relief plaques and panels. It was produced in collaboration with Houston architects [Wyatt C.] Hedrick and [Claude H.] Lindsley (Moorhead et al. 2019).

The need for a county hospital became apparent during the early 1930s. "Inhabitants of the place felt that with the exception of Corpus Christi's Spohn Hospital, facilities in the immediate area were inadequate." A new highway constructed through the county and an increase in both rural and urban population was a driving factor. The Refugio County Memorial Hospital admitted its first patient on February 2, 1940. The original building was expanded in 1962 and then again in 2009 (Hunt 2021).



Figure 23: Refugio County Memorial Hospital ("120 Refugio County" n.d.).

Refugio City Hall

The Public Works Administration also provided financial assistance for the construction of the Refugio City Hall building, which was constructed on the city's original public square between 1935-36 for a total cost of \$42,952. The city again hired Irving H. Dunbar to design the building, and it was dedicated on April 29, 1936. The first floor contains offices, a meeting room, a garage to accommodate two fire trucks, a "fireman's quarters," and a hall used by local civic organizations. Prior to completion of the 1936 building, a "temporary sheet-iron structure in which not only the fire apparatus but the permanent municipal records were kept" was utilized (Living New Deal 2021; Texas Historical Commission 1990).



Figure 24: This undated mid-century image shows Refugio City Hall (Texas Historical Commission Unknown).

Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge was established by an executive order of December 31, 1937 from President Franklin D. Roosevelt and was originally known as the Aransas Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. The refuge was created to provide a sanctuary for migratory birds and to conserve natural resources and beauty. The majority of the refuge is located on Blackjack Peninsula in Aransas County; however, a portion of the refuge crosses the county line into Refugio south of Austwell. Today, the refuge contains woodland, fresh and saltwater marshes, ponds, and coastal grasslands, 54,829 acres of which are on the mainland and 56,668 acres on Matagorda Island (Kleiner 2020b). The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge is more fully described in the Subtheme: Conservation section.

Monuments

The Texas Centennial Commission erected eight markers in the county as the final event of the Texas Centennial in 1936. THC generally considers these to be eligible for the NRHP.

Amon B. King's Men Monument

The most prominent of the markers was the large marble and bronze monument set in King Park. The Amon B. King's Men Monument depicts "the seminude 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" (Wilson 2018a). Josset, a French

sculptor, also worked on the Texas Centennial Exhibition in Dallas. The marker replaced a white marble shaft which had been erected in 1886. That marker was relocated to the grave of King and his men in Mt. Calvary Cemetery (Houston-Floyd 2002).

Mission Nuestra Señora del Refugio

The Mission Nuestra Señora del Refugio monument in Refugio was also commissioned for the 1936 Centennial celebration. The granite and bronze historical marker is listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its state-level significance under the multiple property submission Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial. The monument was a product of a concerted statewide effort to commemorate historic persons, places and events important to Texas history during the mid-1930s (Wilson 2018b; Wilson and Smith 2017).

Other historical markers erected in 1936 include:

- "Refugio County" in Refugio at Commerce and Empresario Streets
- "Site of the Town of Copano," on Copano Bay Street in Bayside
- "Peter Teal," who served in the Army of the Republic, McFaddin
- "King's Men Monument," in Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Refugio
- "John White Bower," a county judge and member of the Congress of the Republic, in Vidauri
- "Site of the Home of John White Bower," in Vidauri
- "Site of the Home of Captain Ira Westover," who was a member of the General Council of Texas who was massacred at Goliad in 1836, located in Refugio

Periods of Significance

The historic context for Refugio County's governmental development occurred in two periods. The first begins in 1830 and extends through 1900, encompassing nineteenth-century facilities through the turn of the twentieth century. Few, if any, of these resources are extant. The second period begins in 1900 and extends through 1973. This era encompasses updated and new facilities developed in the lead up to World War II and includes federal public works constructed in the county as well as new facilities constructed in the decades after the war.

Areas of Significance

Politics/Government

Related Property Types

- Government buildings
- Public utilities including historic lighting, water works, drainage systems, etc.
- Public parks and infrastructure
- Memorials and Markers

SUBTHEME: CONSERVATION

The need to protect natural resources in the region began to become apparent in the 1930s, as resources that had once been abundant were suddenly depleted. Overfishing had significantly reduced populations of aquatic species including turtles, fish, and shrimp. Sport and commercial hunting had decimated wild bird populations, including that of the whooping crane. Two major wildlife refuges were established in Refugio County. The first, the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, in the 1930s, and the Guadalupe Delta Management Area in the late 1970s. Refugio County is home to a wide variety of wildlife including “deer, javelina, bobcat, quail, muskrat, beaver, mink, ring-tailed cat, badger, fox, turkey, duck, geese, jacksnipe, and sandhill crane” (Leffler 2021a).

[Aransas National Wildlife Refuge](#)

The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge was established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as the Aransas Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in an executive order issued on December 31, 1937. Most of the refuge is located on Blackjack Peninsula, in Aransas County, however, a portion is located in Refugio County, south of Austwell.

At first, the refuge consisted of 47,261 acres on the Blackjack Peninsula, on the St. Charles Ranch of Leroy G. Denman. The government raised funds to purchase the surface rights to the property through the sale of migratory bird stamps, and the Continental Oil Company won the right to extract oil and gas within the refuge. In 1967, 7,568 acres along St. Charles Bay was added to the refuge. It was expanded to Matagorda Island with the addition of 19,000 acres in 1982, 11,502 acres in 1986, and 2,940 acres in 1993 (Kleiner 2020b).

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) helped to construct the features of the refuge. They built shell roads, cleared brush, and built dams, residences, a boathouse, the Lookout Tower, and bathroom facilities (Allen and Taylor 1997, 357). Extant built features within the refuge include an observation tower, picnic area, trails and car tour route, and a visitor's center. None of the CCC constructed buildings are located in Refugio County, the only surviving CCC era structures are in the portion of the refuge located in Aransas County. The portion of the refuge located on the mainland is administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, while the Matagorda Island State Park is maintained by the Texas Parks and Wildlife department (Kleiner 2020b).

Today, the refuge contains woodland, fresh and saltwater marshes, ponds, and coastal grasslands, 54,829 acres of which are on the mainland and 56,668 acres on Matagorda Island (Kleiner 2020b).

[Guadalupe Delta Wildlife Management Area](#)

The Guadalupe Delta area was identified for protection by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife in the late 1970s. The wildlife management area consists of four units: Mission Lake Unit, containing 448 acres; Hynes Bay Unit, containing 1,008 acres; Guadalupe River Unit, containing 1,138 acres; and the San Antonio Unit, containing 818 acres. The Guadalupe Delta Wildlife Management Area units are located within the Guadalupe River delta and fall within Calhoun, Victoria and Refugio Counties (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department 2021).

The development of these conservation areas has not significantly influenced the built environment. Within Refugio County, both wildlife preserves are primarily natural, with limited built features. The surrounding areas are generally

rural, however, the town of Austwell has marketed itself as the “Gateway to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge” and has reaped some benefits in the form of tourism as a result of the refuge’s location to the south of town.

Periods of Significance

The period of significance for conservation in Refugio County begins in 1930 when awareness of conservation issues was on the rise and the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge was under development. The period of significance ends in 1980, after the establishment of the Guadalupe Delta Wildlife Management Area in the late 1970s.

Areas of Significance

Conservation

Related Property Types

- Landscape features including paths, walkways, and roads
- Interpretive features, signage, markers, etc.
- Built features including pavilions, restrooms, picnic areas, etc.

SUBTHEME: RECREATION, CULTURE, AND LEISURE

In Refugio County, recreation and leisure have played a comparatively smaller role than it does in surrounding counties. With the loss of the coastal areas to Aransas County in 1871, Refugio had fewer opportunities to attract tourists. Two notable exceptions are the waterside villages of Bayside and Austwell, the latter of which has marketed itself as the “gateway to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.”

Due to the frequent storms which have ravaged the county, many recreational and cultural resources are likely to have been lost to hurricanes and major storms or have sustained significant damage that required repairs. Additionally, due to the county’s small population, the community has only ever had one or two examples of certain property types.

Recreation, Culture, and Leisure

Nearby Aransas County’s natural resources provide numerous recreational opportunities for tourists and residents, although few are enhanced with landscaping and built resources. Refugio County’s proximity to these resources is likely to have caused some spillover, however, few tourist facilities and recreational properties were revealed by research or identified during the survey.

The Aransas National Wildlife Preserve provides outdoor recreation opportunities and the nearby town of Austwell benefits most from proximity to the resource. In the early twentieth century, Aransas County underwent a boom in hunting and sports fishing tourism and some of these activities may have also been conducted in Refugio County. Sport and recreational fishing were popular activities in Bayside and the town was developed with public parks and beaches along the bayside coast.



Figure 25: A fisherman with his catch in Bayside in the early twentieth century (Braunig 1909).



Figure 26: Mid-twentieth century photograph of two boys with a surfboard at Bayside, Texas (Texas Historical Commission Unknown)

Parks

The town of Bayside was developed to include public parkland along the bay shore, with a public bathhouse and wharf (Benowitz 2021a). Today, the bathhouse has been replaced by a late-twentieth-century building, but public access to the waterfront remains. Other municipal parks are located in the various cities throughout the county. With the exception of the Plaza de la Constitución (formerly known as King's Memorial State Park) in the City of Refugio, the majority of these recreational facilities date to the late twentieth century.

Movie Theaters

One historic movie theater is known to be extant in Refugio County. The Refugio Theater was constructed in 1931 by Malcolm G. Simons of San Antonio. The building still stands at 706 Commerce Street, although it has lost its original street level façade, canopy, and sign. The building was designed in the Spanish Baroque style, and a second-story window framed by cast-stone details and a pair of cast-stone quatrefoils are the only remaining aspects of that design (Gerald Moorhead et al. 2018b).

Dance Halls and Social Clubs

According to Preservation Texas,

As Texas was settled, a dance hall was one of the first public buildings constructed in nearly every town and hamlet. Texas dance halls have served and continue to function as meeting spaces and the sites of social events. They contribute to the development of country-western and conjunto music. They preserve the cultural traditions of many ethnic groups who immigrated to Texas and settled here ("Texas Dance Halls" n.d.).

Refugio County is likely to have been home to dance halls which would have catered to both residents and visitors. Although research to date has not identified any known stand-alone dance halls, Refugio City Hall was constructed with a ball room with a band platform and concession stands. Other arenas for dancing and nightlife may have been located in buildings otherwise utilized for practical purposes such as warehouses and other commercial spaces but none were identified during the survey.

Lambert Plaza was built in 1967 and designed by architects Ford, Powell and Carson at 807 Osage Street in Refugio. The building housed offices and a social club funded by Corpus Christi Banker J. Lawrence Wood on the site of his mother's former home (Gerald Moorhead et al. 2018d).

Religious Organizations

More than 13 religious congregations are active in the City of Refugio alone, and several more exist throughout the county (ChurchFinder 2021). Some were organized in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, including historically Black and Anglo congregations. Many of the congregations have weathered storms that destroyed church buildings, requiring temporary gathering locations and rebuilding on higher ground. Between storm damage and growing congregations, some church buildings have been replaced multiple times. Today, most local congregations meet in churches and facilities constructed after World War II, however, a number of older churches are also located within the county.

Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church was constructed in 1901 on the site of the Nuestra Señora del Refugio mission in Refugio. The gothic revival style building designed by Texas born, German trained, architect James Wahrenberger is still extant and has previously been determined eligible for the NRHP. The St. Therese Little Flower Church, located at 315 Pugh Street in Woodsboro, was constructed in 1949 and designed by Leo M. J. Dielmann (Texas Department of Transportation 2021a).

Periods of Significance

Refugio County had two major eras of recreational and cultural development. The earliest period of significance extends from 1871, when the coastal area was separated from the county through 1919, when a major hurricane affected the area. This era encompasses the early development of recreational infrastructure, railroad-oriented tourism and development, and early automobile-oriented tourism. The second period extends from 1919 to 1973, reflecting automobile-oriented development.

Areas of Significance

Architecture, Art, Commerce, Entertainment/Recreation, Ethnic Heritage, Landscape Architecture, Performing Arts, Religion, Social History

Related Property Types

- Tourist/seasonal lodgings: cabins, cottages, seasonal residences, hotels, motels, resorts, fishing camps, hunting camps
- Recreation and culture resources:
 - Theaters/auditoriums: cinemas, movie theaters, playhouses, auditoriums, halls
 - Museums: museums, exhibition halls
 - Music facilities: dancehalls, bandstands, opera houses
 - Sports facilities: gymnasiums, swimming pools, tennis courts, playing fields, stadiums, bowling alleys
 - Outdoor recreation: piers, marinas, parks, campgrounds, picnic areas, hiking/walking trails
 - Fairs: county fairgrounds
 - Monuments/markers: commemorative markers, commemorative monuments
 - Works of art: sculptures, statues, murals
- Social resources: meeting halls, clubhouses, civic organization facilities
- Religious resources: religious facilities, religious-related halls
- Landscape resources: parks, plazas, gardens, forests, unoccupied lands, natural features, street furniture/objects, conservation areas

SUBTHEME: TRANSPORTATION

This context includes significant modes of transportation in Refugio County during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries including minor shipping ports, railroads, and roadways. Prior to fieldwork few resources in Refugio County were expected to be eligible for the NRHP due to the loss of built resources from many devastating weather events. However, extant transportation infrastructure and resources, such as ports, channels, lighthouses, railroads and railroad beds, roadways, and airfields, illustrate how significant these modes of transportation were to Refugio County residents and businesses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Maritime Transportation

As a coastal county along the Gulf of Mexico, water travel was the most accessible type of transportation during the period of early settlement. Bordered on the east by Hynes and San Antonio Bays and the Guadalupe River and bordered on the southeast by the Gulf of Mexico with Copano Bay and Aransas Bay between the mainland and San Jose Island, it was natural for ports to develop in the early through mid-nineteenth century at St. Mary's and Rockport. The Aransas Pass, a narrow pass between San Jose Island and Mustang Island provided a route between Aransas Bay and the open

gulf. The majority of the first ports in Refugio County were located in the coastal areas of the county that were partitioned to form Aransas County in 1871 (Long 2020a). In 1873, Congress passed the River and Harbors Act, authorizing the study for an inland waterway of the Texas Coast. Due to the projected costs of the project, the federal government did not pursue the project and no funds were appropriated for a project of this scale, although the federal government did complete channelization projects near Galveston between the 1890s and the early twentieth century (Alperin 1983).

Wharves were built at Bayside by the turn of the century and suffered extensive damage in the Hurricane of 1919 (Benowitz 2021a). Tivoli became a shipping point for cotton farmers and ranchers in Refugio County in the first decade of the twentieth century and utilized the San Antonio River for transportation. In 1912, Austwell established a small wharf on Hynes Bay, but it was only serviceable by light drafts. In 1914, Austwell had ambitions for a port city and had a channel dredged through the bay to accommodate larger vessels, but the channel filled rapidly, and the effort was unsuccessful (Huson 2020a; 2020c).



Figure 27: This 1910 photograph shows bales of cotton awaiting transport at the Tivoli river landing (Mitchell 1910d)

[Railroad Transportation \(1900-1973\)](#)

In the mid-1800s, several railroads were proposed in Refugio County, the first being the Aransas Road Company in 1847, but the plans were never carried out (Leffler 2020a). The StLBMR arrived in the county in the early twentieth century. Originally chartered in 1903 to extend from Sinton to Brownsville, it was constructed through Refugio County in 1905. The charter was amended to include branch lines, including one that reached Tivoli in 1912 before terminating in Austwell. By about 1920, the railroad's stops in Refugio County also included Inari, Vidaurri, Greta, Refugio, La Rosa, and Woodsboro (Werner 2021).

After the 1919 hurricane, passenger service was discontinued. The StLBMR became a subsidiary of the Missouri Pacific Railroad in 1925 but continued to operate separately until 1954 when it fully merged into the parent company. In 1997, the Missouri Pacific Railroad was merged into the Union Pacific Railroad (Spiller 2016; Werner 2021). The railroad right-

of-way and tracks are still present within the county, however, no additional extant resources including depots were identified during the survey.

Vehicular Transportation

Refugio County is joined to the rest of Texas by U.S. Highway 77, which runs southwesterly across the western part of the county, and by State Highway (SH) 35, which runs north to south across the eastern section of the area (Leffler 2020a). Early overland routes would have consisted of wagon trails and early roads between the coastal settlements of present-day Aransas County and the central City of Refugio, and from Refugio to Goliad, Sinton, and Victoria.

When a state highway system was first adopted in 1917, no state highways were proposed in the county. The closest proposed highway extended from Edinburg in Hidalgo County roughly northeast to Houston and then to the Louisiana border, passing through Victoria (Miller 1917).

By 1919, a route designated Highway 12 crisscrossed Refugio County, from its southern border with Aransas County, northeast from Rockport to Bayview, from Bayview northeast to Refugio, and from Refugio northeast to Victoria (Texas Highway Department 1919). By 1926, a "third class road" had been extended from the Aransas County border near the present boundary of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and ran north-northwest along the eastern border of Refugio County to Victoria. By 1928, the third-class road had been upgraded to State Highway 113, and a route between Sinton and Victoria designated Highway 12B crossed the county through the City of Refugio (State Highway Commission 1926; 1928).

A new roadway, designated Highway 57 and nicknamed the "Hug-the-Coast Highway," was under construction in 1928 between Rockport in Aransas County and Port Lavaca and passed through Refugio County (*Victoria Advocate* 1928). In 1930, the "Hug-the-Coast Road" (now Texas State Highway 35) was constructed across the Live Oak Peninsula and a 1.5-mile causeway was built between Live Oak Point and Lamar in Aransas County (Allen and Taylor 1997, 288). The highway merged into Highway 113 in Refugio County and extended northeast through Tivoli to Port Lavaca (Texas State Highway Department and U.S. Department of Agriculture 1940). By 1936, SH 35, SH 77, and SH 113 were the only paved roads in the county. Most roads remained unimproved, but several in developed towns were graded and drained (Texas State Highway Department and U.S. Department of Agriculture 1940). In 1939, the former route of Highway 57, was redesignated SH 35 (Texas Department of Transportation 2021b).

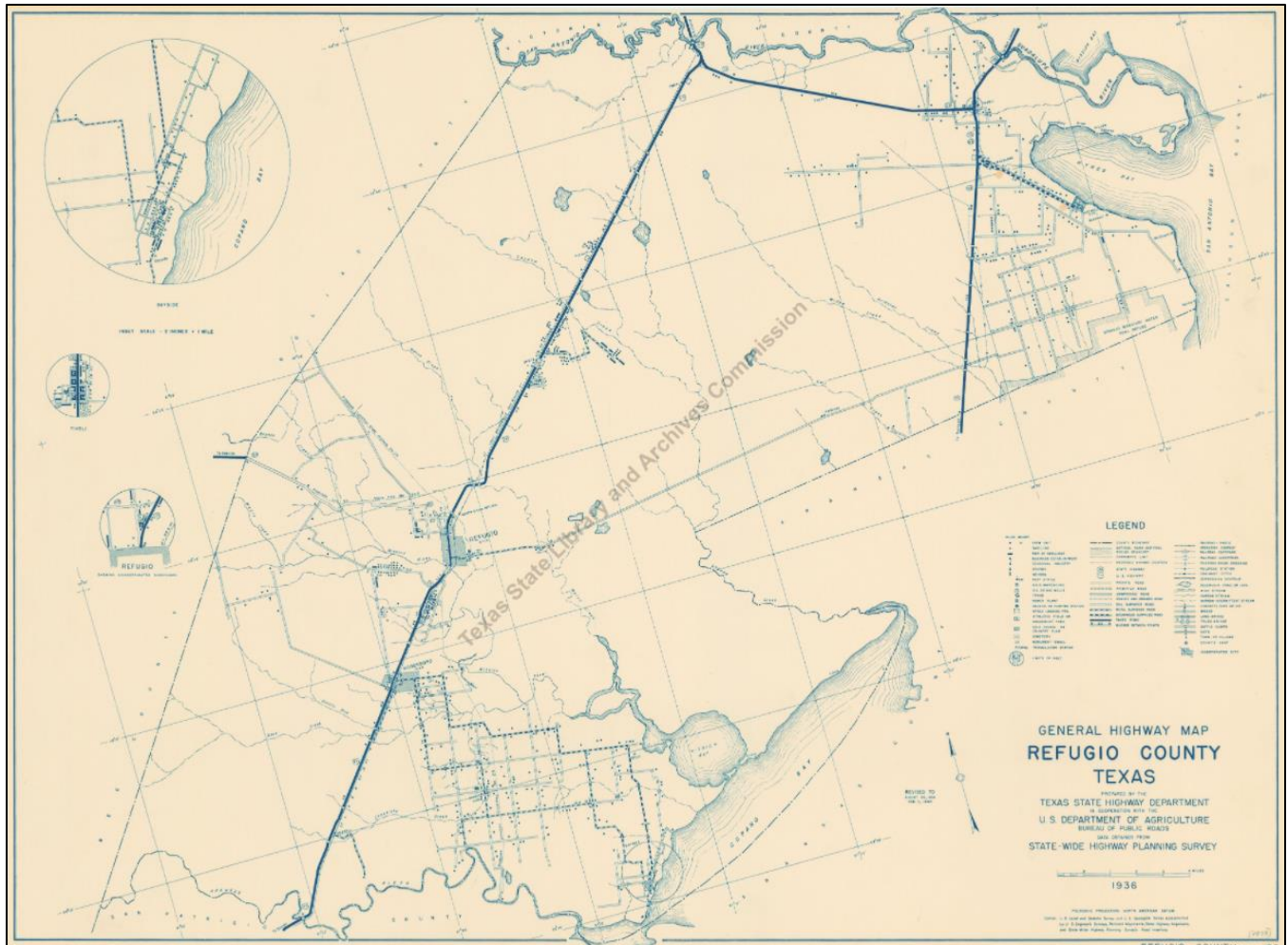


Figure 28: General Highway Map of Refugio County Texas, 1934 (Texas State Highway Department and U.S. Department of Agriculture 1940).

US 183 is a national highway which runs roughly north-south between Presho, South Dakota and the City of Refugio, Texas. Construction began on the highway in 1930, however termini were altered and extended during construction and the southern terminus at Refugio was completed by 1951. FM 774 was constructed in 1947 to provide additional route through the county linking interior portions of the county with Hynes Bay. The farm to market road runs east-west from Austwell to Refugio. Both US 183 and FM 774 remain significant roadways within the county and have experienced upgrades and maintenance throughout the year.

Thanks to statewide infrastructure improvements projects after World War II and the development of several oil fields in Refugio County, the road system improved dramatically during the mid-twentieth century. By 1960, most roads in the county were paved or surfaced with bitumen, and additional county roads had expanded the county's road network, connecting Refugio to smaller settlements throughout the county (Texas State Highway Department and U.S. Department of Agriculture 1961).

Periods of Significance

The period of significance for maritime transportation is 1850, when the first wharves were established at St. Mary's (present-day Bayside) through 1919, when the hurricane of that year destroyed wharves throughout the county including those at Bayside and Austwell. The period of significance for railroad transportation begins in 1903, when the StLBMR was chartered and began making its first surveys through the county through 1942, after which time automobiles became the primary mode of transportation. The period of significance for automotive transportation is from 1917 with the establishment of the state highway system to 1980.

Areas of Significance

Architecture, Agriculture, Commerce, Engineering, and Transportation

Related Property Types

- Maritime-related resources: wharves and docks, warehouses, channels and canals, moveable roadway and railroad bridges over navigable waterways
- Railroad-related resources: depots, railyards, industrial properties, agricultural storage buildings and structures adjacent to railroad tracks (grain bins, etc.), bridges, and warehouses
- Vehicular-related resources: gas stations, hotels and motels, major bridges and causeways, and roadside parks

6. SURVEY ANALYSIS



The First State Bank, Woodsboro | JMT

RESULTS SUMMARY

A total of 1,648 historic-age resources were recorded. Of these resources four are NR listed and retain historic integrity to maintain their listing, 25 are individually eligible for listing in the NRHP, 10 are contributing to two separate eligible districts, 1,603 are not eligible or listing in the NRHP, and six were not visible (Table 10).

Table 10: Total Number of Historic-Age Resources Documented by Survey Category

Survey Category	Number
NRHP Listed	4
NRHP Individually Eligible	25
NRHP Eligible District	2 (10 contributing buildings, 5 each)
Not Eligible	1,603
Not Visible	6
Total	1,648

Prior to the survey fieldwork, a windshield survey identified a possible historic district within the 700 block of Commerce Street in downtown Refugio. Upon closer investigation of the potential district, it was determined the approximate block of downtown commercial buildings did not meet the requirements for listing in the NRHP as a district. It was determined

to be not eligible due to a lack of integrity. The buildings and district do not retain integrity of materials, workmanship, or design.

Work was conducted from the public right-of-way resulting in significant vegetation or a deep setback preventing the survey of six resources. There may be additional historic resources in Refugio County over 50 years of age which were not recorded due to lack of access. Additionally, 10,105 parcels were identified as not containing any historic-age resources.

The survey found that historic-age resources are concentrated in Refugio, Woodsboro, Bayside, Tivoli, and Austwell. With the exception of the area around Refugio, no resources were documented west of US 77. Throughout the county, historic-age resources are mixed with buildings constructed after the survey cutoff date of 1973. Modern buildings have replaced many historic buildings, both in response to storm damage as well as modern infill.

The majority of surveyed resources were domestic buildings. Other common documented historical functions included commerce/trade, industry/processing, healthcare, transportation, hospitality, governmental, religious, recreation/culture, and agriculture (Table 11).

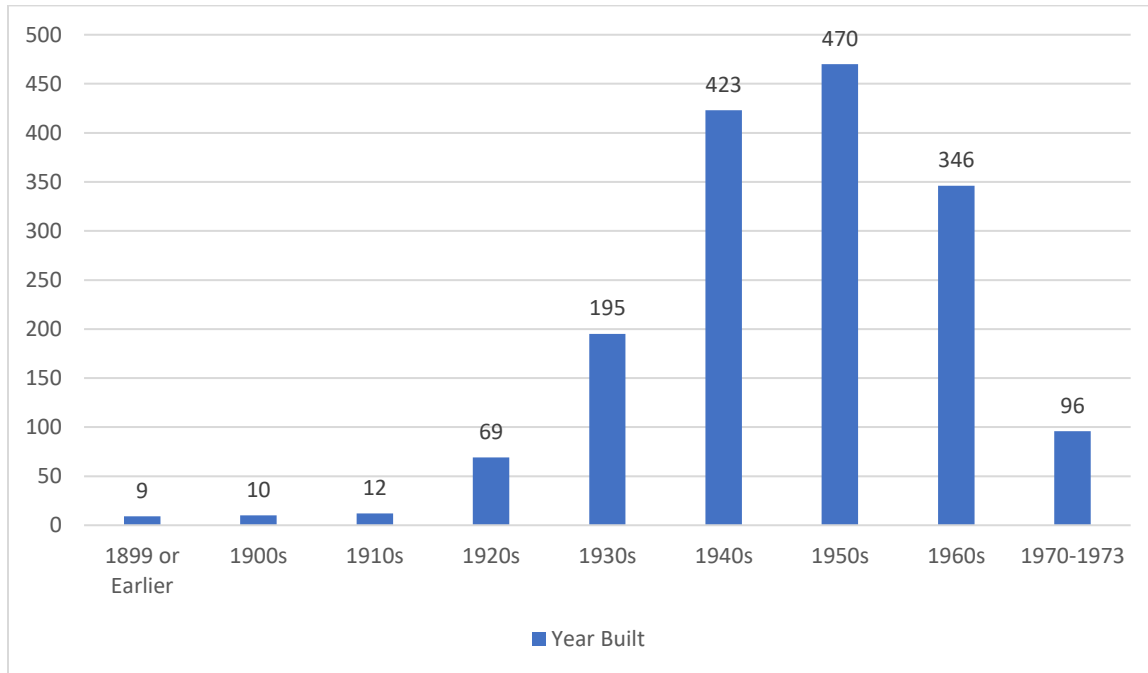
Table 11: Primary Functions of Surveyed Buildings (not including structures and not visible resources). The table does not include the six non-visible resources. The total of resources reflected in the table is therefore 1,642.

Current Use	Total
Agriculture	5
Commerce/Trade	47
Domestic	1,372
Educational	4
Funerary	6
Government	9
Healthcare	1
Hospitality	1
Industry/Processing	7
N/A	1
Other	6
Recreation/Culture	3
Religious	26
Transportation	1
Utilities	1
Vacant/Not in Use	152

Historic Use	Total
Agriculture	10
Commerce/Trade	72
Domestic	1,477
Educational	7
Funerary	6
Government	10
Healthcare	2
Hospitality	8
Industry/Processing	9
N/A	1
Other	4
Recreation/Culture	3
Religious	26
Transportation	5
Unknown	1
Utilities	1

The construction date of surveyed historic-age buildings ranged from 1836 to 1973. As shown in Chart 1, the majority were built between 1940 and 1969, with the 1940s and 1950s representing the largest share of documented resources. Only 100 buildings were constructed prior to 1930 equaling 6.13% of the surveyed resources.

Chart 1. Year Built Date of Surveyed Resources The chart does not include five of the six not visible resources, or the one resource recorded as a structure. The total of resources reflected in the chart is therefore 1,630.



RESOURCES CURRENTLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The Wood House (NPS Reference No. 83003811) | 533 Copano Bay Drive, Refugio



Mission Nuestra Señora del Refugio Monument (100002759) | 1008 South Alamo Street, Refugio



Refugio County Courthouse (02000865) | 808 Commerce Street, Refugio



Figure 29. Refugio County Courthouse c. 1939 (TxDOT, 1939)



Amon B. King's Men Monument (100002758), Refugio



Figure 30. Amon B. King's Men Monument (NRHP Nomination Form, 2018).

NRHP RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents NRHP recommendations. Properties recommended individually eligible are provided first, followed by recommended historic districts.

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

Twenty-four resources are recommended individually eligible for the NRHP as a result of this survey. These resources possess historic significance on a local, state, or national level under Criteria A, B, or C, or a combination thereof, and appear to have retained sufficient historic integrity to convey their historic associations. Due to the inherent limitations of survey from the public right-of-way, additional examination may be warranted to more fully assess historic integrity of materials, workmanship, and design.

Four resources previously listed in the NRHP were reassessed: the Amon B. King's Men Monument (NPS Reference No. 100002758, Listed under Criterion A for Art and Social History), Mission Nuestra Señora del Refugio Monument (100002759, Criterion A for Art and Social History), the Refugio County Courthouse (02000865, Criterion A for Politics/Government), and the John Howland Wood House (83003811, Criterion C for Architecture). Each of these four properties were re-evaluated in this survey and each was found to retain sufficient historic integrity to remain eligible for listing in the NRHP.

The properties recommended individually eligible for the NRHP were constructed between 1836 and 1969 and are associated with events or trends (NRHP Criterion A), persons (NRHP Criterion B), design (NRHP Criterion C), or potential information (Criterion D) important to local or state history. They are located in Austwell, Bayside, Refugio, Tivoli, and Woodsboro (Figure 1).

Each eligible property is summarized below. A complete tabulation is provided in Table A-3 (Appendix A). Survey forms and individual maps are provided in Appendix C.

AUSTWELL

Residence, Cemetery Road (Southeast of Austwell Cutoff Road) | Austwell THC Atlas Number 3300069619



Constructed ca. 1940, this Craftsman dwelling on Cemetery Road in Austwell was the only farmhouse with extant associated farmland and a silo that was surveyed. Although the dwelling is vacant, it retains its original form and the majority of its original features including wood siding, windows, full-width engaged porch, and exposed rafter tails. It is likely additional agricultural buildings were present at some time. The resource retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for agricultural trends in Refugio County and Criterion C for architecture. Given its association with agriculture, the resource may possess additional significance under Criterion B for its potential association with an early resident of Refugio and further research is recommended.

BAYSIDE

Old St. Mary's Cemetery | Bayside Cemetery Road, Bayside THC Atlas Number 3300069622



According to the Old St. Mary's Cemetery historical marker, the town of St. Mary's was founded in 1857 by Joseph F. Smith, nephew of Texas' provisional governor Henry Smith. Upon its founding, 10 acres were set aside to use for a burial ground with the oldest grave dating from 1860. In 1886, a storm destroyed businesses and homes causing residents to move away from St. Mary's. By 1909, development returned to the area and the cemetery was used once again. The cemetery serves as the sole reminder of the town of St. Mary's and is the final resting place of war veterans and pioneer area settlers among others. The resource retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, and setting and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the founding and subsequent disappearance of St. Mary's. Old St. Mary's Cemetery meets Criteria Consideration D as a cemetery that derives its primary significance from association with historic events.

REFUGIO

Refugio Tire Center | 602 South Alamo Street, Refugio THC Atlas Number 3300069628



This former Phillips 66 Gas Station in Refugio was constructed ca. 1965. This post-war building retains many of its original features including the angular canopy, large plate glass windows, and stylized box design. Although it no longer serves as a gas station, its original purpose is clear. According to the TxDOT Field Guide to Gas Stations in Texas, "In 1960, Phillips 66 introduced what arguably became its most popular and iconic service station design, which featured a large, upward-slanting, triangular-shaped canopy. Clarence Reinhardt, an architect who worked at Phillips and designed most of the company's buildings, developed this distinctive design, inspired by designs he observed in Southern California" (TxDOT 2016, 7-11). The resource retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the ever-growing prevalence of Transportation and its related architecture in the United States and Criterion C for architecture as an excellent intact example of a Post-war Modern building in Refugio.

Lambert-Whitlow Home | 904 South Alamo Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069613



Figure 31. The Lambert Whitlow House c. 1910 (Victorian Advocate, July 17, 2011).



According to *The History of Refugio County, Texas*, the Lambert-Whitlow Home, also known as the Rose Lambert-Douglas-Whitlow Home, was constructed in 1905, by Refugio builder and lumber dealer George Strauch for Rose Lambert, a daughter of Johanna Whelan and John Thomas O'Brien, children of the 1832-1834 colonists (The Refugio County History Book Committee 1985, 261). The Queen Anne style dwelling originally had an onion dome on the northeast corner, however a fire in the early 1930s destroyed the original roof. Other than this fire damage, the dwelling retains its original form and many original materials including wood siding, window sashes, wood columns and balustrade. The Lambert-Whitlow Home retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criteria B for its association with Prominent Refugio families as well as Criterion C as an excellent example of a Queen Anne home in Refugio.

Refugio City Hall | 609 Commerce Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069624

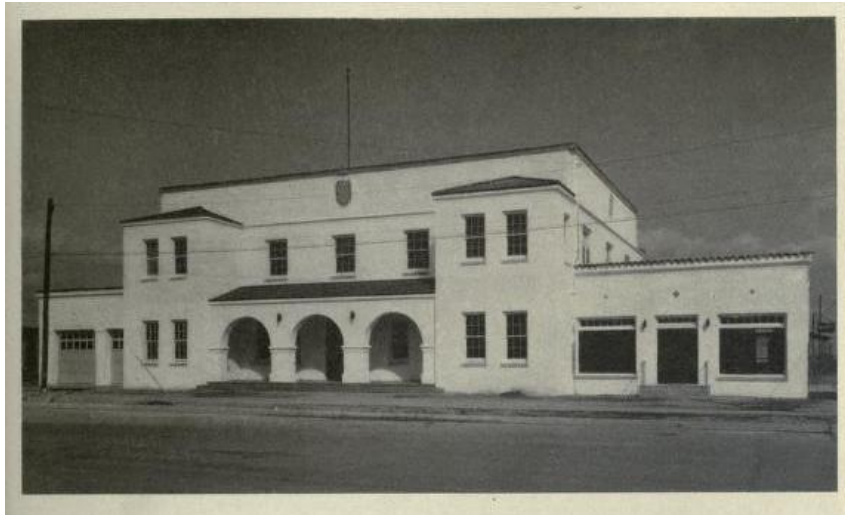


Figure 32. Refugio City Hall c. 1939 (C.W. Short & R. Stanley-Brown. "Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the PWA". 1939).



Refugio City Hall was constructed, by an unknown architect, in 1936 with funds from the Federal Public Works Administration (PWA). The building contains offices, public meeting space, garages for two fire trucks, and firefighter lodgings. City Hall originally housed the city's firefighting services. The fire truck garages have been converted into office spaces with the garage openings each filled in with a pedestrian door and window. The building retains its original form and Spanish Colonial Revival elements including a stucco finish, flat straight barrel mission tile roof, arcaded entrance, and decorative stucco tiles. The building retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the New Deal/PWA and as a significant municipal building in the City of Refugio and Criterion C as an outstanding, extant example of a Spanish Colonial Revival in Refugio.

Ben Shelton Dry Goods | 710 Commerce Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069606



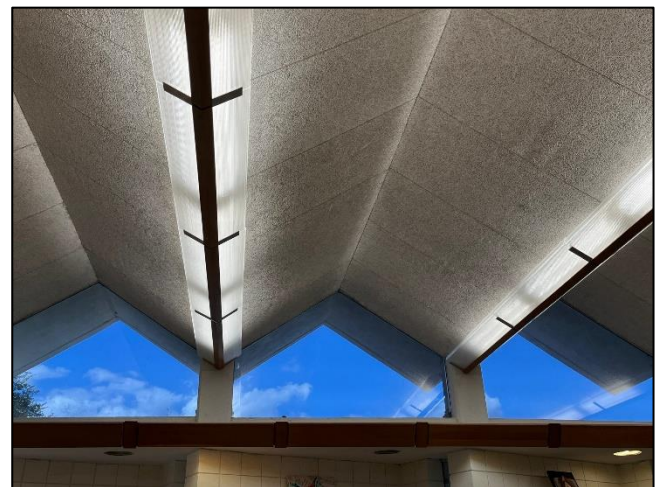
Ben Shelton opened his Dry Goods and Groceries in May 1907. Although the building has no prominent style and has gone through various alterations, it retains its original form and decorative brickwork. The building has lost other original materials including the plate glass windows and the original canopy above the first floor. According to the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) Archipedia, it is possible the building can be credited to Danish-born architect Jules Leffland, who was prominent throughout south Texas, as it displays some detailing similar to his commercial buildings, particularly in the Cuero Commercial Historic District. The resource retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture as an example of an early 20th century masonry commercial building.

First National Bank | 733 Commerce Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069607



Constructed in 1929, the building at 733 Commerce Street was the original location of the First National Bank. The bank was reorganized from the Old Bank of Refugio and operated at this location until it moved to the new location at 111 East Plasuela Street in 1959. According to the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) Archipedia, the building was designed by San Antonio architect, John M. Marriott whose other buildings include the NRHP listed Saint Anthony Hotel and the Olmos Theatre, both in San Antonio. The building was designed with Art Deco detailing including fluting around the front entrance and windows, a modified chevron pattern below the cornice, vertical elements and projections, and decorative elements at the top corners of the first-floor façade windows and entry surround. The building retains its integrity of association, location, feeling, setting, design, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with Commerce in Refugio County and under Criterion C for its architecture.

Refugio Public Library | 811 Commerce Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069620



Constructed ca. 1960, the Refugio Public Library is one of a few intact examples of a Post-War Modern public building in Refugio County. It was designed by Charles B. Donnelly of Corpus Christi, who also designed the Corpus Christi Electric Company formerly the Lew Williams Chevrolet Dealership. The building retains modern elements such as a boxy, minimalist exterior, zig zag roof, and a focus on the horizontal rather than vertical. The interior of the library is

accented with angular, wood, mid-century design elements. The resource retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as a rare example of a Post-War Modern public building with high integrity in Refugio County. More research is needed to determine the building's potential eligibility under Criterion A and B for its association with the local government in Refugio County.

**Mitchell-Simmons-Wales House "Aquana" | 904 Commerce Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069610**



Constructed in 1902 for Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Mitchell, local ranchers, the Mitchell-Simmons-Wales House, commonly called Aquana, is believed to be the first large frame building in Refugio County. According to the Refugio County Chamber of Commerce Parade of Homes website, "Mitchell's ranching interests are still operated by his descendants today. One of Mitchell's daughters married an oilman, William Joseph Simmons, who came to Refugio with the "oil boom" of the 1920s. They inherited and remodeled the house in 1940 (Refugio County Chamber of Commerce)" Although Aquana's roof cladding has been replaced, most of the original materials including wood siding, window sashes, wood columns and balustrade remain intact. The dwelling retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship. It is recommended that Aquana is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B for its association with prominent Refugio residents, the Mitchells, and under Criterion C as an excellent example of Queen Anne architecture in Refugio County.

Residence, 1004 Commerce Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069611



1004 Commerce Street is recommended eligible under Criterion C as an excellent intact example of Queen Anne architecture. Although some of the materials have been altered and there is a rear addition, the dwelling displays typical Queen Anne features. The dwelling is designed with a hipped roof with a cross gable and turret. The turret is characteristically located at the corner of the front façade. Additionally, there is a two-story wrap around porch with decorative woodwork used for the second-floor balustrade and first floor frieze. Other typical features include bay windows, wood siding, patterned roof, and original windows. It retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship.

Barefield Learning Center | 612 East Commons Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069621



The Barefield Learning Center is the only remaining building associated with the first African American school in Refugio County known as the Refugio Colored School. The original school (date of construction unknown) was located at the corner of Santiago and Osage Streets and later moved to the corner of Alamo and King Streets. While at the latter location, the school was destroyed by fire in 1927. In 1928, classes were held at Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church. In 1929, a two-room schoolhouse was constructed on East Commons Street through the Rosenwald school building program. In approximately 1933, the extant white frame building was added to the school. According to the school's historical marker, "the school was renamed Barefield after Professor A.T. Barefield, an educator in Refugio from 1902 to 1949, who promoted good citizenship within the black community." The remaining building retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, setting, and workmanship. The building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as the first African American school in Refugio with ties to Rosenwald funds and Criterion C for architecture.

Power-Shay House | 102 East Empresario Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069608



According to *The History of Refugio County, Texas*, the Power-Shay House was constructed in 1888 by Viggio Kohler, a master builder from Rockport (The Refugio County History Book Committee 1985, 255). The dwelling was built for Philip Power, the younger son of local empresario, James Power. Although there is no true style, the dwelling contains some characteristics of a side-gabled, two-story Folk Victorian such as a simple folk form, porch details such as turned spindles and decorative brackets. Originally, the projecting porch was two stories tall with similar wood details. The dwelling retains its original form and many original materials and features including wood siding, window sashes, wood columns and doors. The Power-Shay House retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criteria B for its association with prominent Power family as well as Criterion C as the only extant example of a Folk Victorian home with integrity in Refugio.

West-Linney House | 403 East North Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069616



Originally occupied by Agnes West, a daughter of Johanna Whelan and John Thomas O'Brien, the West-Linney House was constructed in 1910. The Neoclassical dwelling features typical characteristics including Ionic columns, an accented full-height entry with pediment, and double interior chimneys. The dwelling retains its original form and many original materials including wood window sashes, wood columns and balustrade, and wood detailing. The West-Linney House retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criteria B for its association with prominent Refugio families and Criterion C for an exceptional example of Neoclassical architecture in Refugio.

Strauch-Allison House | 103 East Plasuela Street, Refugio

THC Atlas Number 3300069609



The Strauch-Allison House was constructed in 1910 by George Strauch, founder of George Strauch Lumber Company. According to the Refugio County Chamber of Commerce Parade of Homes website, Strauch built many of the outstanding structures in Refugio including Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church. Constructed in the Colonial Revival style, the dwelling use features a full-height, two-story porch accented with Ionic columns and a simple balustrade on the second story. According to the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) Archipedia, Stauch “conservatively included a circular pavilion bay at the southwest corner of the gallery, in lieu of a turret.” The resource retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B for its association with George Strauch, a prominent businessman and builder in Refugio and Criterion C for architecture as an excellent intact example of a Colonial Revival building in Refugio.

Vantage Bank | 111 East Plasuela Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069604



Originally built as the First National Bank of Refugio, Vantage Bank is one of a few examples of Post-War Modern architecture in Refugio County. Constructed by an unknown architect in ca. 1959 the mid-century bank displays a mix of typical Post-War Modern features along with International style elements. Replacing the original First National Bank of Refugio at the corner of Purisima and Commerce, the building features large plate glass windows, a low, horizontal design, cantilevered sections and a main entry that blends in with the design featuring no accentuation. Although the building has an addition to the north elevation which was added in the 1980s (The Refugio County History Book Committee 1985, 255), the resource retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture as an excellent intact example of a post-war modern building in Refugio.

Residence, 108 West Plasuela Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069618



The dwelling at 108 West Plasuela Street was constructed ca. 1900. Its Greek Revival style includes a full-width single-story flat-roof porch, vernacular square Doric columns, and small frieze-band windows on the second-floor façade. Although some of the materials have been altered and there are multiple rear additions, the dwelling retains integrity of association, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, as an early intact dwelling within Refugio. Given its early construction date, ca. 1900, the resource may possess additional significance under Criterion B for its potential association with an early resident of Refugio and further research is recommended.

**Woodworth House “Ballygarrett” | 209 East Purisima Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069612**



Figure 33. Woodworth House, date unknown (Texas Historical Commission, n.d.).



The Woodworth House, commonly called “Ballygarrett,” was built for Mr. and Mrs. Louis Henry Woodworth ca. 1902 by Mr. Lutenbacher of Goliad. Woodworth was an editor for the *Refugio Register* and a secretary for a citizens committee within Refugio. His wife, Mary Frances Power Swift, granddaughter of Ballygarrett, County Wexford, Ireland native Epesario James Power, was a member of the Mount Calvary Cemetery Society and Our Lady of Refuge Church choir (The Refugio County History Book Committee 1985, 253). According to the dwelling’s Historic Marker Application the original building was one story with eight rooms with the second story and back addition added in 1907. Ballygarrett displays Queen Anne style through its extant spindlework, decorative brackets, different types of siding and turret. Overall, the dwelling retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship. Ballygarrett is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion B for its association with prominent Refugio residents Mr. and Mrs. Louis Henry Woodworth and Criterion C as an excellent intact example of a turreted Queen Anne in Refugio.

John S. Ragland House | 401 E. Purisima Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069617



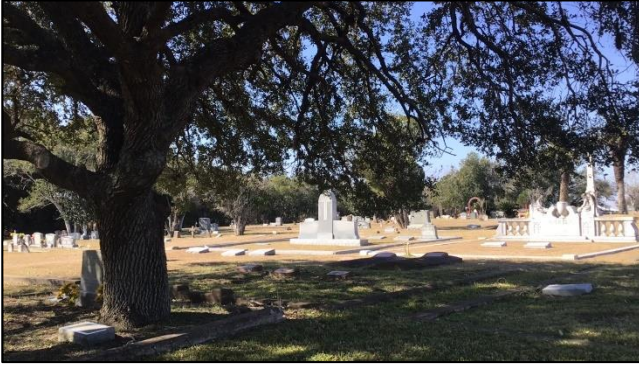
Constructed ca. 1870, the John S. Ragland House is the most intact example of a Greek Revival home in Refugio. According to *The History of Refugio County, Texas*, the dwelling "originally faced west, but Wilson W. Heard, who bought the house in 1908 moved it to face south" presumably to avoid fronting the train tracks (The Refugio County History Book Committee 1985, 261). The dwelling retains many characteristics of a Greek Revival building including a wide cornice, square columns and corner pilasters with Doric capitals, cornice returns above the pedimented entry and side elevations, and transom and sidelights around the entry. The dwelling retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion C as an excellent intact example of Greek Revival architecture in Refugio. The Ragland House meets Criteria Consideration B as a property moved from its original location that is primarily significant for its architectural value.

Refugio Sheriff's Office/Lambert Plaza | 807 Osage Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069625



Designed by San Antonio architect O'Neil Ford, the Refugio Sheriff's Office, sometimes referred to as Lambert Plaza, was constructed in 1967 for Corpus Christi banker J. Lawrence Wood on the site of his mother's family dwelling. The site takes up a full block and is designed around an internal patio. According to the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) Archipedia, "Ford employed a mixed blend of buff Mexican brick for walls and paving. Wood and glass doors... and wall-mounted beaten copper lanterns... The patio, planted with ornamental date palm trees, is ringed by a covered passageway that opens to Osage Street through a tall entrance loggia. Once inside the courtyard, Lambert Plaza has the scale of a public building..." The building does not appear to have undergone any substantial alterations and retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture.

Mount Calvary Cemetery | Santiago Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069623



According to Mount Calvary Cemetery's historical marker, the once forgotten cemetery was established with the burial of 16 soldiers massacred during the Texas revolution of 1836 including Captain Amon King. The earliest burials were provided for soldiers who fell at the Battle of Refugio in March 1836. Also interred here are Irish settlers of the 1830s Power-Hewetson Colony including empresario James Power, who also signed the Texas declaration of Independence and J. Hampton Kuykendall, a revolutionary soldier, journalist, congressman, and scholar. The resource retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, and setting and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the Texas Revolution and Captain Amon King. Mount Calvary Cemetery meets Criteria Consideration D as a cemetery that derives its primary significance from historic events.

Refugio Community Cemetery | W Commons Street and Santiago Street
THC Atlas Number 3300077705



The Refugio Community Cemetery is located at the corner of Commons and Santiago Streets, west of downtown Refugio. The cemetery is a historically African American cemetery in Refugio, with some headstones dating back to the early 1800s. Given the date range of operation, the cemetery has examples of many different headstones and materials. The land is characterized by mature mesquite trees, and enclosed by a metal, chain link fence. Today, the cemetery is maintained by the Refugio Community Cemetery Association after the land was transferred from private to public ownership in 1947. The Refugio Community Cemetery maintains its integrity of setting, location, feeling, materials, design, workmanship, and association and is recommended eligible for listing on the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with African American heritage in Refugio County. The Refugio Community Cemetery meets Criteria Consideration D as a cemetery on the basis of age.

Memorial Hospital | 107 Swift Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069626



Originally conceived of in the early 1930s by prominent local resident Joe C. Heard, Refugio Memorial Hospital was completed ca. 1940 with additions in 1962 and 2009. Designed by Irving H. Dunbar and the firm of Wyatt C. Hedrick and Claude H. Lindsley, the original portion of the building is an excellent example of a Modernistic building with strong Art Deco and Moderne elements including a flat roof, curved corners, smooth exterior, applied decorative motifs, and horizontal grooves. While there is a modern addition, the historic 1960 addition does not detract from the building's integrity but rather speaks to the growing size and needs of the community. The building retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with Healthcare and Medicine in Refugio County and under Criterion C for architecture as an example of Modernistic style.

Oaklawn | 801 East Ymbacion Street, Refugio
THC Atlas Number 3300069614



Figure 34. Oaklawn in 1937 (The TXGenWeb Project, 1937).



Constructed ca. 1850 by Allen and Martha Heard when they moved to Refugio from Alabama. Oaklawn was originally located south of the Mission River. According to the Refugio County Chamber of Commerce Parade of Homes website, the dwelling was moved in sections to its current location in 1900. The Greek Revival home has a historic rear addition and retains historic details including full-width, two-story entry porch, wood six-over-six double-hung sash windows, and chimney. Oaklawn retains integrity of association, design, feeling, materials, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion C as a Greek Revival home which retains many original features. Although the resource was moved from its original location, it was done so during the building's period of significance, meeting Criteria Consideration B.

TIVOLI

Residence, 147 Austwell Road, Tivoli

THC Atlas Number 3300069615



Constructed ca. 1930, the dwelling at 147 Austwell Road is a cross-gable roof Craftsman. Although roof cladding has been replaced, the dwelling retains many of its original materials including wood siding, leaded windows, and wide window surrounds. Additionally, the dwelling retains its original partial-width, front gable roof. The dwelling retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an excellent example of a Folk Victorian dwelling with intact materials in Tivoli.

WOODSBORO

The First State Bank | 320 1st Street, Woodsboro THC Atlas Number 3300069605



According to the January 1971 issue of *The Texas Architect* the First State Bank was designed in 1969 by Page Southerland Page, the oldest architecture practice in Texas (Loving 1971). The Post-War Modern building sits on a fully designed site with decorative paving, plantings, steps, and raised planters. Its modern design is accented by full height arcades composed of sets of three arches on three elevations. Additionally, the use of buff-colored brick and plate glass reflect the buildings mid-century style. Although there is a ca. 1988 addition it was designed sympathetically to the original design. The building retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an excellent example of Post-War architecture including a fully planned site.

DISTRICT PROPERTIES

HOTEL TIVOLI DISTRICT

THC Atlas Number 3300069629

The Hotel Tivoli District is recommended eligible for the NRHP. A summary of the recommended district is provided below. See also Table A-4 in Appendix A and the survey form in Appendix E. The five contributing buildings in the district, two contributing ancillary buildings, and one non-contributing building are not individually eligible. The survey form for the district is provided in Appendix E.

The Hotel Tivoli District is recommended eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A, at the local level for its association with the early growth of Tivoli, Criterion B, for its association with Preston Rose (P.R.) Austin a co-founder of the town of Tivoli and Austwell, and Criterion C, as an intact representation of an early- to mid-20th century hotel development that retains much of its original design, materials, and outbuildings.

Constructed ca. 1910, by P.R. Austin, the hotel was built along the 100 Block of Austwell Road in response to the rapid growth of Tivoli. According to the Texas State Historical Association, Tivoli was founded in 1907, and within seven years "Tivoli had an estimated population of 400, two general stores, a bank, a drugstore, a blacksmith, a hotel, and telephone service. By 1928 it reached a peak population of 700." Additional research is recommended to more fully assess eligibility under Criterion A, to determine the cabin's association with the hotel, as well as when the hotel ceased operation and to finalize the district boundary and period of significance.

P.R. Austin was a partner in the Refugio Land and Irrigation Company, which acquired large landholdings in the area in the early 1900s. According to his Texas Historical Marker, "He conducted a series of agricultural experiments and determined that the land was best suited to raising cotton. The company divided the property into small cotton farms for sale to German and Bohemian farmers." He went on to found both Austwell and Tivoli. Austin and the Refugio Land and Irrigation Company provided both communities with a church, school, store, hotel, and cotton gin and mill, as well as modern conveniences such as electricity and a telephone system.

The district is comprised of the main ca. 1910 hotel, four multi-residence cabins, two garages (considered ancillary structures), and one mobile house; all buildings, except the mobile house, are wood frame (Table 12). The hotel displays some simple Classical Revival elements such as the two-story projecting front gable porch, wood siding, and columns. The fenestration pattern is unchanged and although not fully visible, some windows appear to be original. Although the second story of the porch has been screened in, the first floor remains intact. The remaining cottages and garages can be classified as Frame Vernacular due to their simple design and materials. The metal frame mobile house is also a form of Frame Vernacular house and is not contributing to the district. Despite the buildings being in various states of disrepair, the district retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship.

Table 12: Historic District Resources

THC Atlas No.	Resource Name	Address	Resource Type	Contributing Y/N
3300069632	102 Austwell Road	102 Austwell Road, Tivoli	Building	Y
3300069631	106/120 Austwell Road	106/120 Austwell Road, Tivoli	Building	Y
3300069629	108 Austwell Road	108 Austwell Road, Tivoli	Building	Y
3300069633	116 Austwell Road	116 Austwell Road, Tivoli	Building	Y
3300069630	118 Austwell Road	118 Austwell Road, Tivoli	Building	Y
N/A	Garage	N/A, Austwell Road, Tivoli	Building	Y
N/A	Garage	N/A, Austwell Road, Tivoli	Building	Y
N/A	114 Austwell Road	114 Austwell Road, Tivoli	Building	N



Aerial map of Hotel Tivoli Historic District. Image from Google Imagery 2023. Accessed June 20, 2023.



102 Austwell Road, front elevation; facing southwest.



102 Austwell Road, side (east) elevation and rear (south) elevations; facing northwest.



102 Austwell Road, side (west) elevation; facing east.



116 Austwell Road, front (north) and side (east) elevations; facing southwest.



108 Austwell Road, front (north) and side (east) elevations; facing southwest.



108 Austwell Road, front (north) and side (west) elevations; facing south.



108 Austwell Road, rear (south) elevation; facing northeast.



118 Austwell Road, front (north) and side (west) elevations; facing south.



118 Austwell Road, rear (south) and side (west) elevations; facing northeast.



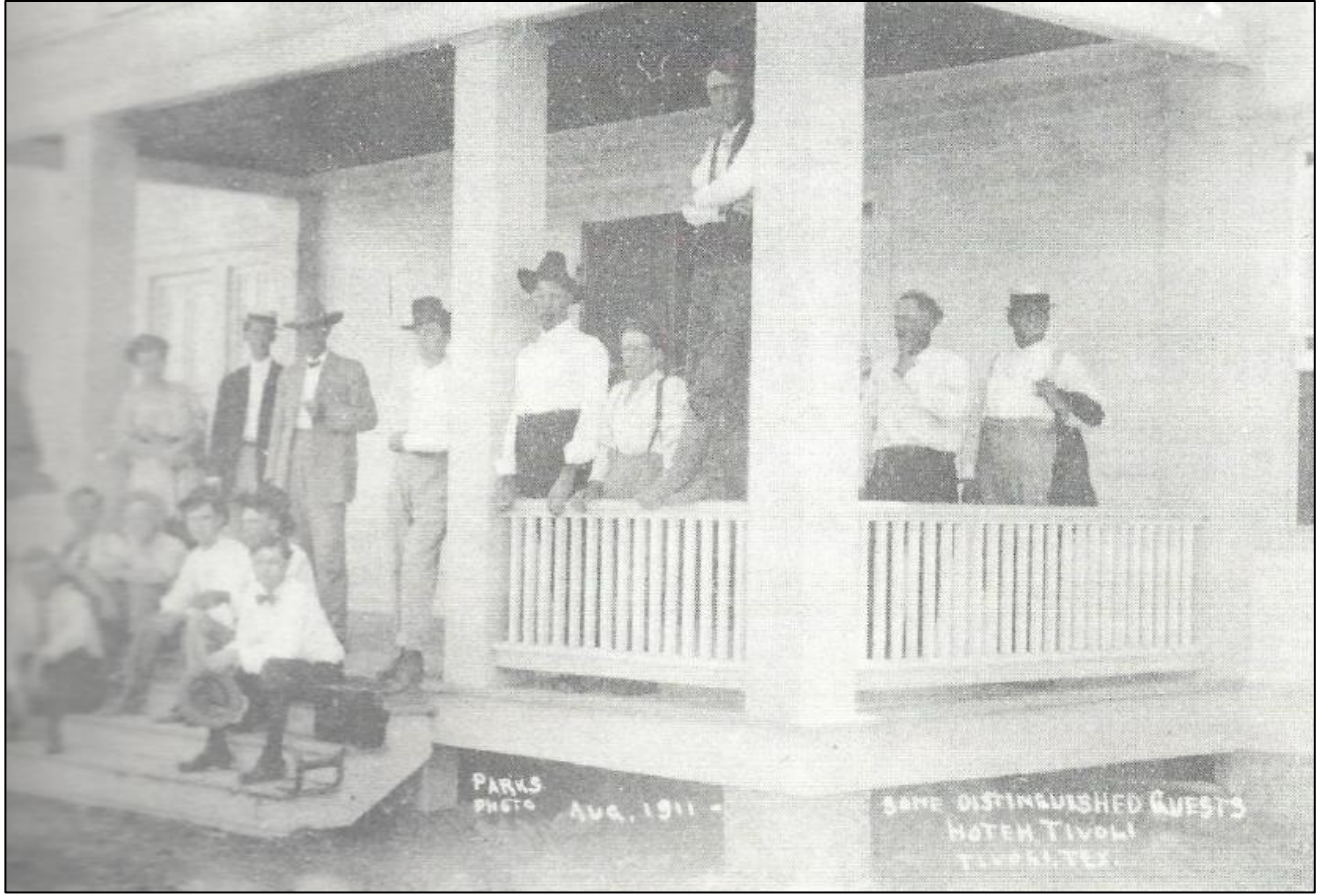
106/120 Austwell Road, front (north) and side (east) elevations; facing south.



106/120 Austwell Road, rear (south) elevation; facing north.



Historic photo of Hotel Tivoli ca. 1911. (Source: *The History of Refugio County, Texas*)



Historic photo of guests on the porch of Hotel Tivoli, 1911. (Source: *The History of Refugio County, Texas*)

OUR LADY OF REFUGE CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

THC Atlas Number 3300069627

The Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church Complex is recommended eligible for the NRHP. A summary of the recommended district is provided below. See also Table A-4 in Appendix A and the survey form in Appendix E. The five contributing buildings in the historic district and are not individually eligible. The survey form for the district is provided in Appendix E.

Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church Complex is recommended eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criteria A for its association with religion in Refugio County and the area's Spanish and Irish Immigrants as well as Criterion C for architecture as a rare example of a Gothic Revival style church in the region. Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church Complex meets Criteria Consideration A as a religious property that derives its primary significance from its historical importance and its architecture. All buildings retain integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and are contributing to the complex. The property is eligible for listing as a district in the National Register of Historic Properties under

Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church Complex is located at 1008 South Alamo Street in Refugio. The complex occupies an entire block fronted to the north by W Federacion Street, to the east by S Alamo Street, to the south by W Roca Street, and to the west by Power Street. The original mission was constructed by Spanish clergymen in 1793 and named Nuestra Senora del Refugio (Our Lady of Refuge). The original mission was located approximately 30-miles northwest of its current position but was relocated to its current site two years later in 1795. Our Lady of Refuge was the last of the Texas missions established in the state. Due to Native American raids, the mission was abandoned by the Franciscans in 1824. In the 1830s Irish immigrants revived the church and used it as both a church and hospital ("Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church" n.d.; Miles 2018).

Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church is composed of six buildings—the church, school, convent, youth center, administration building, and auditorium. Some of the buildings have been connected by a series of later additions. The church is a basilica plan Gothic Revival style sanctuary. The school, convent, and auditorium buildings are Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission inspired or Post-War Modern.

The 1795 mission was destroyed in the Battle of Refugio (1836) and its stones were used to construct a replacement church in 1866. The 1866 church was designed and constructed by Refugio builder Strauch. The existing church was constructed in 1901 by Texas born, German trained, architect James Wahrenberger. The school and convent were erected by the church in 1939-1940. The additional buildings were constructed in 1946, and the entire complex was rehabilitated in 1975 (Miles 2018; Moorhead 2018).

Table 13: Historic District Resources

THC Atlas No.	Resource Name	Address	Resource Type	Contributing Y/N
3300077706	Our Lady of Refuge Church	1008 S Alamo Street, Refugio	Building	Y
3300077707	Our Lady of Refuge Convent	1008 S Alamo Street, Refugio	Building	Y
3300077708	Our Lady of Refuge School	1008 S Alamo Street, Refugio	Building	Y
3300077709	Our Lady of Refuge Auditorium	1008 S Alamo Street, Refugio	Building	Y
3300077710	Our Lady of Refuge Youth Center	1008 S Alamo Street, Refugio	Building </td <td>Y</td>	Y
3300077711	Our Lady of Refuge Administration Building	1008 S Alamo Street, Refugio	Building	Y



Aerial map of Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church Complex. Image from Google Imagery 2023. Accessed June 20, 2023.



Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church



Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church



Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church Administration
Building



Our Lady of Refuge Convent



Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church Youth Center



Our Lady of Refuge Convent



Our Lady of Refuge School

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK



Tivoli Cabin | JMT

As a result of this survey, 25 buildings and one district have been recommended eligible for listing in the NRHP. These resources possess significance on a local, state, or national level under Criteria A, B, or C, or a combination thereof, and appear to have retained sufficient integrity to convey their historic associations. Due to the inherent limitations of survey from the public right-of-way, additional examination may be warranted to more fully assess historic integrity of materials, workmanship, and design.

Recommendations for future work and preservation are listed below.

1. **Conduct further study of select resources.** Resources recommended for study outside the parameters of this survey are listed below.
 1. **Residence, Cemetery Road (Southeast of Austwell Cutoff Road), Austwell:** Conduct research to determine a chain of title and if anyone associated with the property were people of importance to the area. This will determine if the property is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion B. Additionally, determine the original boundary of the property and its agricultural history to verify the resource's eligibility under Criterion A.
 2. **Residence, 108 West Plasuela Street, Refugio:** Due to the resource's age, it is possible the house is associated with prominent early residents that may have historic significance under Criterion B. Conduct deed research to determine its eligibility for a potential association with a person significant in the past.

- 3. Hotel Tivoli Historic District:** While the construction date of the hotel is documented along with the builder, more research is required to determine if the adjacent cabins are associated with the hotel and when the hotel ceased operation. This information can therefore be used to develop a district boundary and period of significance
- 2. Maximize accessibility of survey documentation and use for planning.** The documentation collected during this survey should be made available to Refugio County Historical Commission, Refugio County municipalities, with encouragement to publish the data in an interactive GIS map. Alternatively, or additionally, the THC should host the data in the THC Atlas. This report should be used by residents and officials to understand the historic building fabric within the county in an effort to protect historic resources. The survey results should be used to assist in planning efforts including projects which require consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The results contained herein, should be utilized early in project planning to prevent disruption of historic resources including districts.
- 3. Support NRHP designation of eligible properties and districts.** Prior to this survey, there had been no comprehensive survey of Refugio County. Currently, there are 29 historic markers and four resources in Refugio County are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The JMT/Stantec team recommends that the THC reach out to owners of properties recommended eligible for the NRHP and other interested parties to encourage new NRHP applications. Increasing the number of NRHP-listed properties and historic districts in the survey area can help drive heritage tourism and bolster community pride. Additionally, nonprofit properties would be eligible for state historic preservation tax credits, and income-producing properties would be eligible for both state and federal tax credits if they are listed in the NRHP individually or as contributing to a district.
- 4. Support funding for historic property restoration and repair.** Many properties recommended eligible for the NRHP have visible storm damage or are in some state of disrepair. Preservation of historic buildings is a sustainable practice as these structures were often designed for their local climate reducing energy costs as well as reducing development and material waste through their existence. The JMT/Stantec team recommends that municipalities encourage residents to preserve and renovate existing structures rather than demolishing and replacing historic buildings. Properties that are listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places may be eligible for grants such as the THC's Texas Preservation Trust Fund.
- 5. Support disaster preparedness plans that include historic properties.** To prevent future loss of important resources in Refugio County, disaster preparedness plans should be reviewed to ensure that historic properties are considered and that strategies are in place for how to protect and rehabilitate historic properties in the event of a major storm or hurricane.
- 6. Educate property owners on preservation tax credits.** Owners of historic properties, especially in disaster-prone places, need help accessing funding to ensure the long-term survival of these important resources. Residents should be made aware of both state and federal programs that could benefit the preservation of their property.
- 7. Promote the need and benefits of preservation ordinances.** Refugio and Woodsboro should consider adoption of preservation ordinances to protect historic resources through a review process which attempts,

within reasonable limits, to preserve historic forms and materials (integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling).

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