1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Bernhard Electric Building  
Other name/site number: NA  
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 103-109 E. Goodwin Avenue  
City or town: Victoria  
State: Texas  
County: Victoria  
Not for publication: ☐  
Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

Applicable National Register Criteria:  ☐ A  ☐ B  ☐ C  ☐ D

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<td>State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government</td>
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In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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<th>Signature of commenting or other official</th>
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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other, explain: ________________________

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<th>Date of Action</th>
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5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: COMMERCE/Trade: Specialty Store

Current Functions: VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification: No Style

Principal Exterior Materials: Concrete, Brick

Narrative Description (see pages xx-xx)
8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Commerce (local)

Period of Significance: 1930-1973

Significant Dates: 1930 (original construction), ca. 1940 (construction of addition)

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

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

Architect/Builder: Wagner, Ed (Building Contractor)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see pages xx-xx)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see pages xx-xx)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
  _ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
  _ previously listed in the National Register
  X previously determined eligible by the National Register
  _ designated a National Historic Landmark
  _ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
  _ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:
  x State historic preservation office (Texas Historical Commission, Austin)
  _ Other state agency
  _ Federal agency
  _ Local government
  _ University
  _ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre (Approximately 0.203 acres)

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA


Boundary Justification: The boundary follows the current legal parcel and contains the area historically associated with the Bernhard Electric property.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Emily Payne, Senior Architectural Historian; Erin Tyson, GIS Specialist
Street & number: P.O. Box 9648
City or Town: Austin  State: TX  Zip Code: 78766
Email: epayne@hhminc.com
Telephone: 512/478-8014
Date: June 2023

Additional Documentation

Maps  (see pages xx-xx)

Additional items  (see pages xx-xx)

Photographs  (see pages xx-xx)

This project was funded in part through a grant from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, as administered by the Texas Historical Commission. The contents and opinions, however, do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior. This program receives Federal funds from the National Park Service. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental Federally Assisted Programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127.

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

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

Name of Property: Bernhard Electric Building
City or Vicinity: Victoria
County: Victoria County
State: Texas
Photographer: Erin Tyson (HHM Inc)
Date: July 28, 2022

Photo 1 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0001)
Oblique view of the Bernhard Electric Building, camera facing southwest.

Photo 2 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0002)
East elevation, camera facing west.

Photo 3 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0003)
Oblique view, camera facing southeast.

Photo 4 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0004)
Oblique view of the north elevation under the canopy, camera facing southwest.

Photo 5 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0005)
View of the north elevation under the canopy, camera facing east.

Photo 6 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0006)
View of the north elevation, camera facing south.

Photo 7 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0007)
Oblique view of the south elevation, camera facing northwest.

Photo 8 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0008)
View of the west elevation, camera facing northeast.

Photo 9 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0009)
Interior view of the westernmost space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue (the original 1930 portion of the building), camera facing north.

Photo 10 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0010)
Interior view of the middle space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing northwest.

Photo 11 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0011)
Interior view of the easternmost space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing north.
Bernhard Electric Building, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

Photo 12 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0012)
Interior view of the easternmost space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing southeast.

Photo 13 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0013)
Interior view of the westernmost space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing southwest.

Photo 14 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0014)
Interior view of the non-original storage room within the middle space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing southwest.

Photo 15 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0015)
Interior view of the non-original bathrooms and kitchenette within the middle space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing east.

Photo 16 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0016)
Interior view of the office space off of the easternmost space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing southeast.

Photo 17 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0017)
Interior view of the office/vestibule within 105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue (the ca. 1940 addition), camera facing north.

Photo 18 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0018)
Interior view of the open garage space within 105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing north.

Photo 19 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0019)
Interior view of the open garage space within 105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing southeast.

Photo 20 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0020)
Interior view of the open garage space within 105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing northwest.

Photo 21 (TX_VictoriaCounty_BernhardElectric_0021)
Interior view of the office/vestibule and non-original bathrooms within 105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue (the ca. 1940 addition), camera facing southwest.
Bernhard Electric Building, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

Narrative Description

This project was funded through an Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund grant from the National Park Service that addresses damage inflicted by Hurricane Harvey. In January 2021, NPS staff concurred that the property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Bernhard Electric Building was built in 1930 at 103-109 E. Goodwin Avenue in downtown Victoria, Texas, with a side addition built around 1940. The Bernhard Electric Company specialized in sales and repair of mechanized equipment for automobiles and boats, and the selection of a corner lot and the design of the building responded to the business’s functional needs. The one-story building’s flat roof and rectangular footprint create a box-like form. At the corner of E. Goodwin Avenue and N. Liberty Street, a series of brick piers create an open-air canopy recessed under the corner portion of the main roof form, facilitating vehicular access. The building has a hollow-clay-tile structure with a stucco veneer on the front and minimal architectural detailing, consistent with its utilitarian function. The overall exterior appearance of the building remains generally intact today. Although new overhead rolling doors have been added to enclose two of the once-open bays fronting E. Goodwin Street, this alteration is reversible and resulted in minimal damage to the adjacent historic fabric. The building’s form remains consistent with the period of significance (1930-1973), and most of the historic-age exterior wall materials, windows, and doors remain intact, as does the metal canopy along the N. Liberty Street façade. The brick piers supporting the recessed canopy have lost their original Art Deco detailing, but the piers themselves remain intact. Repair work to address water damage that resulted from Hurricane Harvey in 2017 began in July 2022 with approval from the Texas Historical Commission and is being carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Overall, the building retains sufficient historic integrity.

Setting (Maps 1-5)

Victoria County is located in southeast Texas on the coastal prairies. Matagorda Bay adjoins the county’s eastern corner. The Guadalupe River flows through the center of Victoria County, joining the San Antonio River and emptying into the San Antonio Bay just southeast of the county line. The city of Victoria serves as the county seat, located in the center of Victoria County, along the eastern banks of the Guadalupe River. An orthogonal street grid organizes Victoria’s downtown, centered around the courthouse and courthouse square. The lot encompassing the Bernhard Electric Building sits on the block immediately northeast of the courthouse square, within the downtown’s core (Maps 2-3). At the time of the building’s original construction in 1930, the lot was located at the edge of downtown, bordered by commercial development to the south and west, residential development to the east, and a church to the north (Figure 1). Today, adjacent land uses are commercial and governmental, including a theater to the west, shops and offices to the south and east, and a public library to the north. Immediately adjacent buildings are one or two stories in height and built out close to the lot line, except for the library, which is set back to allow a strip of grass and a line of oak trees near the sidewalk. A block further west, Main Street includes taller downtown development, including the 12-story Wells Fargo tower at the intersection of Goodwin Avenue and

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3 Victoria, Tex. [map], (Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1928), sheet 3, from the University of Texas at Austin (UT), https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/txu-sanborn-victoria_1928-03.jpg.
Main Street (Photo 1). A block further east, the area transitions to single-family residential development, landscaped with front lawns, trees, and decorative plantings.

Construction Chronology

The parcel of land encompassing the building originally was developed as a small one-story frame building with a two-story adjacent tower, as shown on Sanborn maps from 1885. Sanborn maps from 1896, however, show the earlier building demolished and commercial development encroaching into the formerly residential area. Sanborn maps from 1907 through 1917 illustrate a wood-frame Blacksmith shop with a dirt floor; an auxiliary wood warehouse to the rear also appears by 1912. By 1928 Sanborn maps show the lot vacant again. An aerial photo from 1930 illustrates the original portion of the Bernhard Electric Building occupying the corner lot at 109 E. Goodwin Avenue (Figure 1). The 1930 aerial shows the one-story building with a square footprint and flat roof; the open-air bays along the northern façade are intact, but the western half of the building has not yet been constructed. A side addition was constructed around 1940. By 1949, Sanborn maps depict this approximate 1940 expansion of the building westward to also include the lots at 105 and 107 E. Goodwin Avenue (Figure 2). The new addition also had a square footprint and flat roof. Sanborn notations indicate that both the original building and the addition were constructed using hollow clay tile. The large bays on the addition indicate that it was designed to accommodate sales and service for large vehicles like automobiles or boats.

Architectural Character

Exterior

The design of the Bernhard Electric Building is simple and utilitarian – one story in height with a flat roof and a rectangular footprint. The original portion of the building is oriented both north (E. Goodwin Avenue) and the east (N. Liberty Street). As noted above, the building was constructed in two phases: the original portion to the east was constructed in 1930, and a side addition to the west was constructed around 1940.

The original north elevation was three bays wide, with brick piers supporting the flat roof and forming an inset canopy for cars to drive through (Photo 6). The exterior walls of the original portion of the north and east elevations are veneered with stucco. Historically, the name “Bernhard Electric Co.” was stenciled onto the stucco along the canopy’s north-facing roofline, and cast concrete Art Deco ornamentation topped the corner piers (missing today; compare Figure 3 with Photo 6). The wide roof span of the canopy was supported by a series of simple flat trusses constructed with standard two-inch-by-four-inch lumber (Photos 4 and 5). Under the canopy, each bay of the three bays on the north elevation features a separate entry flanked by windows. The easternmost bay features a single-door entrance, while the other two bays both feature double-door entrances. All doors are wood with a three-by-four grid of lites, topped by wood transoms (Figure 3, Photos 4 and 5). All windows are fixed in wood frames with concrete sills. The east elevation of the original building includes the inset canopy on the northern side (Photo 2). The southern portion of the eastern elevation has a symmetrical composition, with a central single-door entrance. The east-facing door is wood with a wood transom, but a board currently conceals the pattern of lites. The windows on the east elevation are fixed in wood frames, with a fenestration pattern using a single window in the southernmost bay but paired windows in all other bays. A flat metal canopy shelters the east-facing windows and

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4 *Victoria, Tex.*, (Sanborn, 1885), sheet 2, from UT, [https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/txu-sanborn-victoria-1885-2.jpg](https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/txu-sanborn-victoria-1885-2.jpg). Note that “E. Goodwin Ave.” was labelled as “E. Common” on Sanborn maps until 1928.
6 *Victoria, Tex.*, (Sanborn, 1885-1917), various sheets, from UT, [https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps-sanborn/v.html](https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps-sanborn/v.html).
8 Inferred based on analysis of Sanborn maps (shown by 1949) and tenant occupancy records (with a new tenant present by 1943).
doors, suspended using metal tie rods anchored to the east elevation. The south (rear) elevation features a painted exterior masonry wall surface so that the concrete frame structure and hollow clay tile walls remain distinguishable on the eastern/original portion of the south elevation (Photo 7). Fenestration on the original portion of the south elevation is limited to small horizontal windows set about six feet above the floor to limit visibility. These window openings are boarded today.

The 1940 addition is oriented toward the north (E. Goodwin Street) only. The addition is three bays wide, supported by concrete piers. All exterior wall surfaces on the addition are veneered with stucco. Historic photographs from 1942 show that the two eastern bays were open-air and accessible to vehicles via E. Goodwin Street (today enclosed with metal overhead rolling doors; compare Figure 3 with Photo 3). The westernmost bay of the addition is not visible in historic photos, but presumably, it was enclosed with a storefront, similar to the configuration seen today (Photos 3 and 6). The historic-age concrete sidewalk adjacent to this bay does not feature a curb cut, which suggests that the space was never intended for vehicular access. The storefront in the westernmost bay is symmetrically composed with a central single-door entrance, filled by a non-original metal door topped by a metal-framed transom. Trios of fixed windows in metal frames flank the door on either side. The west elevation has a large storefront window near the front/north side (boarded today), along with a series of two small windows and two single-width doors toward the rear (also boarded today, Photo 8). The south (rear) elevation of the addition is veneered with stucco, but the outlines of the concrete frame and hollow clay tile remain visible in sections. A mural of an octopus wrestling a horse adorns this façade. Composed of six bays, the third bay from the west includes a garage door opening with a metal overhead rolling garage door (Photo 7). The other rear-facing bays of the addition have a combination of narrow window openings and single-width door openings, all boarded today.

**Interior**

The interior of the Bernhard Electric Building includes distinct spaces associated with the 1930 original building (to the east) and the 1940 addition (to the west) (Figure 5). The original 1930 portion is subdivided into three parallel commercial spaces, all opening onto the canopy-covered façade fronting E. Goodwin Street (Photos 9, 10, and 11). The southern storefront space also includes a side entrance from N. Liberty Street (Photo 12). All three of these spaces likely were open and unsubdivided, but only the westernmost space remains unsubdivided today (Photo 13). The middle space is subdivided into three sections, with an open store space remaining at the front, a storage room at the middle, and restrooms and a kichenette at the rear (Photos 14-15). The southernmost space includes a half-wall subdividing an office space at its western end (Photo 16). Few character-defining finishes or fixtures remain within the original 1930 spaces today. Original wood door and window surrounds remain, however, original flooring is missing, and ceilings appear to have been dropped to accommodate vents and electrical conduits for ceiling lighting.

The adjoining 1940 addition was designed as an open L-shaped garage space, which surrounded an office or vestibule occupying the building’s northwest corner. The office/vestibule features a single entrance and storefront windows facing E. Goodwin Avenue (Photo 17). The L-shaped garage space includes overhead rolling garage doors opening both to the north elevation and to the south (rear) (Photos 18-19). Historically, a series of enclosed single-entry doors opened onto the west and south elevations (Photos 19-20). Today, nonoriginal interior subdivisions include the addition of bathrooms to the rear/west of the vestibule, as well as a small partial-height space in the southwest corner of the garage (Photos 19-21). The garage interior is largely unfinished, revealing the original concrete columns, wood-trussed roof structure, and hollow clay tile exterior walls (Photos 18-20). The interior finishes in the front office/vestibule include original linoleum tile, plaster walls, and plaster ceilings (partially missing due to water damage).

The water damage to the building largely resulted from Hurricane Harvey in 2017. The hurricane destroyed the building’s roof, caused runoff from the parking lot that seeped into the building, and led to ground swelling that cracked the building’s plaster and damaged plumbing. The resulting water infiltration damaged interior finishes as
well as mechanical and plumbing systems – including a break in the main plumbing line that runs under the building. Repair work funded by the Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund grant from the National Park Service began on July 27, 2022. The scope of work includes repairing plaster walls, repainting, repairing windows, replacing deteriorated windows and doors in-kind, replacing clay parapet caps, replacing the non-historic overhead door with a new compatible overhead door, repairing or replacing the damaged canopy, improving drainage at south elevation, and waterproofing the south wall.

**Integrity**

Overall, the exterior appearance of the building remains generally intact today. The building retains its integrity of location and setting, and its form and massing have changed little since the period of significance. Although the original Art Deco ornamentation is missing from the exterior columns, the overall form reflects the building’s original utilitarian design. Although there has been some loss over time, and most recently with Hurricane Harvey, integrity of materials and workmanship is visible in the intact historic-age exterior wall materials, windows, and doors that remain in place, and the canopy along the N. Liberty Street elevation. While new overhead rolling doors have been added to enclose two of the once-open bays fronting onto E. Goodwin Street, it is possible that overhead rolling doors were present during the period of significance given the building’s use, and this alteration is reversible and resulted in minimal damage to the adjacent historic fabric. The inset canopy and garage interior remain accessible to vehicles, helping to maintain the integrity of association with the building’s auto-oriented historic context. Although some interior partitions have affected spaces historically used as stores, the original three-unit configuration remains intact in the original 1930 portion of the building, and open garage space and office/vestibule remain intact in the 1940 addition. Together, these aspects contribute to the feeling of an early-to-mid 20th century Electric Company that specialized in sales and repair of mechanized equipment for automobiles and boats.
Statement of Significance

The Bernhard Electric Building is located at 103-109 E. Goodwin Avenue in downtown Victoria, Texas. The property was built in 1930 by building contractor Ed Wagner and it operated until 1986, specializing in sales and repair of engines and batteries for boats and automobiles. During the 1940s, the building was expanded to provide a separate leased space occupied by compatible auto-related tenants – Granberry Motor Sales (1943-1951), Patek Motor Company (from around 1951 to approximately 1960), and the Yellow & Checkered Cab Company (from around 1965 to 1986). The building is a rare surviving example of early-to-mid-20th century auto-oriented commercial development and the combined auto-and-marine business model appears to have been unique to in Victoria during the period of significance. The construction of the building and success of the business is also associated with the rise of motorized outdoor recreation and tourism that gained popularity in the area in the same period. The property is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Commerce at the local level of significance. The period of significance dates from its initial construction in 1930 through 1973, the NPS 50 year cutoff.

Brief Historic Context

Local Development Patterns

The town of Victoria was established in 1824 but remained small until about 1910 (Figure 6). The early economy depended on ranching and meatpacking, as well as small-scale commerce. As the seat of Victoria County, the first courthouse was constructed in 1849, located on an open public square known as De Leon Plaza. A second public square, known as Market Square, was located a few blocks further south, and the town’s commercial core formed around these two squares. Prior to the arrival of the railroad, people and goods arrived in Victoria primarily by water via Port Lavaca and Indianola. Commercial development also extended along E. Commercial Street and E. Common Street (later E. Goodwin Avenue), which led to these nearby port towns. The San Antonio and Mexican Gulf Railroad arrived in Victoria in 1861, but the Civil War led to destruction of the line, and the rebuilt successor—the Gulf, Western Texas and Pacific Railway—did not resume operation until 1871. A map from 1874 shows the rebuilt rail line crossing diagonally through the town’s grid (Figure 7). The railroad brought additional commercial activity and new urban development, including “a new courthouse built in 1892, a jail built in 1884, a small city hall, and a fire station.” Between 1906 and 1910, riverboats briefly provided transportation from the Gulf of Mexico to Victoria via the Guadalupe River, but auto transportation ultimately provided the biggest boost to the town’s economy.

After 1910, the town of Victoria experienced rapid population growth (Figure 6). The urban fabric of the town grew concurrently, and by 1917 Sanborn maps start to show auto-oriented buildings, like garages, auto shops, and auto

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13 Booth Mooney, History of Victoria: Including 75 Years in Victoria (Victoria, Texas: Victoria Public Schools, 1959), 22-27
dealerships lining Main Street, Bridge Street, and the cross-streets between.\textsuperscript{14} City streets were paved from 1917 through 1918, further facilitating automobile travel.\textsuperscript{15} Early highway maps of Texas show State Highway 12/12 B running through Victoria from the northeast to the southwest (roughly along the alignment of present-day U.S. Highways 59 and 77), as well as State Highway 29 traveling from the northwest to the southeast (roughly aligned with present-day U.S. 87).\textsuperscript{16} In the 1910s and 1920s, improved auto transportation and irrigation encouraged growth and diversification of the agricultural economy in the surrounding county. By 1930, “Victoria County held more cattle than any other county in Texas.”\textsuperscript{17} Cotton, rice, fruit crops, and poultry supplemented cattle ranching. Industries also emerged in Victoria, including the “cotton oil industry, railroad shops, creameries, poultry dressing plants, planning mills, large power plant, sand and gravel industry.”\textsuperscript{18} Amid this economic growth, Victoria County passed its first bond for paving county highways in 1927, implemented by 1932.\textsuperscript{19}

The rising popularity of the automobile led to increased oil exploration, with the first productive oil wells in Victoria County discovered in 1930.\textsuperscript{20} Oil production in Victoria County grew exponentially in the 1930s, from under 60,000 barrels in 1932 to 4.8 million barrels in 1938.\textsuperscript{21} Wealth in the county rapidly increased and “spurred a boomtown atmosphere as development in every sector was seen, including home building, retail store development, and road improvements.”\textsuperscript{22} Industry grew, with Victoria’s 14 industrial plants employing 105 workers by 1939.\textsuperscript{23} Newfound dispensable income allowed Victoria’s residents to purchase luxury goods of all kinds – especially automobiles and other mechanized tools and vehicles. Between 1930 and 1940, automobile registrations in Victoria County increased from 4,987 to 7,271 (48 percent).\textsuperscript{24}

The military build-up prior to World War II brought continued development to Victoria. The federal government invested in highways associated with the defense system. The state highways running through Victoria benefited from this investment. By 1940 highway maps showed two “Federal Aid” highways traveling through downtown Victoria: U.S. Highway 87 running from northwest to southeast (partially along Goodwin Avenue), as well as U.S. Highway 59 running from southwest to northeast.\textsuperscript{25} In 1941, Foster Army Air Field opened six miles northeast of Victoria along U.S. Highway 59.\textsuperscript{26} Throughout World War II, the U.S. Army used the field for aerial gunnery instruction. The arrival of airmen from across the nation energized Victoria’s social scene, as documented by \textit{LIFE Magazine} in 1942 (Figures 3-4).

\textsuperscript{15} Mooney, \textit{History of Victoria}, 33; Shook, “Victoria, TX.”
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Highway Map of Texas} (Texas State Highway Department, 1919), from TSLAC, https://www.tsl.texas.gov/apps/arc/maps/maplookup/06183.
\textsuperscript{17} Roell, “Victoria County.”
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Texas Almanac}, 1939 (Dallas: Dallas Morning News, 1939), 364, from the Portal to Texas History crediting the Texas State Historical Association, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth117160/m1/364.
\textsuperscript{19} Mooney, \textit{History of Victoria}, 33.
\textsuperscript{20} Roell, “Victoria County.”
\textsuperscript{21} Mooney, \textit{History of Victoria}, 35.
\textsuperscript{22} Terry Hammonds, \textit{Historic Victoria: An Illustrated History} (San Antonio: Historical Publishing Network, 1999), 55.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Texas Almanac}, 1949-1950 (Dallas: Dallas Morning News, 1949), 306, from the Portal to Texas History crediting the Texas State Historical Association, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth117167/m1/308/.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Texas Almanac}, 1931 (Dallas: Dallas Morning News, 1931), 199, from the Portal to Texas History crediting the Texas State Historical Association, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth117160; \textit{Texas Almanac}, 1941-1942 (Dallas: Dallas Morning News, 1942), 272, from the Portal to Texas History crediting the Texas State Historical Association, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth117164.
\textsuperscript{25} General Highway Map, Victoria County, Texas [Map] (Texas Highway Department, 1936-1940), from TSLAC, https://www.tsl.texas.gov/apps/arc/maps/maplookup/05015. Note that the map marks both of these highways with “FA” for “Federal Aid.”
After World War II, the military continued to play an important role in Victoria, with Foster Field used for single-engine jet training during the Korean War (renamed Foster Air Force Base in 1954). The military presence, improved federal highway system, and availability of energy combined to spur continued commercial and industrial growth. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1949 show auto-oriented businesses lining E. Goodwin Avenue between Moody Street and N. De Leon Street (Figure 2). By 1950, Victoria boasted 17 industrial plants and 229 employees. Major industrial employers included the 1950 Alcoa Aluminum smelter located 35 miles southeast of town, the 1951 Dupont nylon intermediates plant, and the 1951 Union Carbide plant in Seadrift. The region’s industrial growth necessitated increased development of nearby ports and waterways, and by 1970 the Victoria Chamber of Commerce advertised the city’s proximity to the Matagorda Ship Channel and connection to the Gulf Intercoastal Waterway via the Victoria Barge Canal.

Waterway development also encouraged recreational fishing and boating coinciding with the rise of tourism. Recreational tourism became an increasingly significant part of Victoria’s economy – as did businesses catering to recreational tourists, like the Bernhard Electric Company. Across the nation in the mid-twentieth century, the availability of automobiles led to a boom in the popularity of outdoor recreation, and state and national park facilities expanded to meet growing demand. In Texas, new state parks were strategically located along new highways to bolster outdoor tourism. This trend became especially popular in the 1930s, and the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps contributed to construction and improvement of a vast network of highways and adjoining state and national parks. Several of the state’s earliest state parks were located near Victoria. Goose Island State Park was acquired beginning in 1931, offering public boat access to Aransas Bay just 57 miles south of Victoria. Goliad State Park, located 27 miles southwest of Victoria, was established in 1933 and improved by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Located on the San Antonio River, the park boasted historic sites, as well as camping, fishing, and boating. After World War II, new technologies like fiberglass and more efficient engines made commercial motorboats more affordable, and the post-war economic boom placed motor boats within reach for more families and small-scale commercial fishermen. The State of Texas continued to expand and improve water-based recreational sites in the area in the late twentieth century, constructing the Copano Bay State Fishing Pier in 1967, then acquiring all Mustang Island slightly further south in 1972.

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28 Victoria, Tex. [Map] (Sanborn, 1928-1949), various sheets, from ProQuest via Austin Public Libraries.
29 Texas Almanac, 1949-1950 (Dallas: Dallas Morning News, 1949), 301, from the Portal to Texas History crediting the Texas State Historical Association, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth117167/m1/308/.
Evolution of Owners and Occupants

The parcel of land encompassing the Bernhard Electric Company first experienced permanent development around 1903, with the construction of a blacksmith and wheelwright’s shop. Sanborn maps document the demolition of the blacksmith’s shop around 1928. In 1929, J.R. Gervais purchased the empty parcel of land. Gervais worked as an insurance agent and never developed the land. By 1930, Paul Bernhard purchased the property and constructed the original portion of the Bernhard Electrical Company building. Paul Bernhard was born in New Braunfels in 1884 to German immigrant parents. His father worked as a blacksmith, and Paul worked as a farm laborer by age 16. In 1908, Paul married his first wife, Mary Leana “Maime” McKay, in Guadalupe County. Maime died in childbirth in 1909, leaving Paul a widower with a young son by age 25. The 1910 census enumerates Paul Bernhard living alone in Guadalupe County and working as a blacksmith in his own shop, while his young son lived with his maternal grandfather in Clear Spring, Guadalupe County. Paul moved to Refugio County slightly thereafter, where he married Bertha Schultz Bernhard in 1914. Together, the couple moved to Shiner, Texas, in Lavaca County. Paul’s 1918 World War I draft registration card documents him living in Shiner and working as a mechanic at the Shiner Oil Mill. The 1920 census lists Paul Bernhard still living in Shiner, with wife Bertha and their new son Wallace, working as a machinist at a garage. The family moved to Victoria in the 1920s. In Victoria, Paul entered into a partnership with local electrician Charles Abshier. Advertisements for the “Abshier & Bernhard Electric Co.” appeared in the Victoria paper beginning in 1924. One advertisement from 1926 described Abshier & Bernhard as “Located in the Hahn building on South Liberty Street. The company has everything electrical for the auto and home and does all kinds of electrical wiring and repairing.” Bernhard purchased Abshier’s interest in the electric company in 1926, operating the “Bernhard Electric Company” out of the Hahn building. The 1930 census recorded the Bernhard household at 107 W. San Antonio Street including Paul, Bertha, and son Wallace, with Paul’s employment listed as an electrician. That same year, in 1930, Paul Bernhard relocated his business to a new building at 109 E. Goodwin Avenue — the original portion of the present-day Bernhard Electric Company building. From the outset, advertisements noted that the Bernhard Electric Company catered to boaters and sportsmen as well as automobiles, advertising “A complete line of fishing, tackle, boats and motors,” as well as “Everything for the hunger…including Peters, Remington and Winchester shells.” Paul Bernhard himself gained local renown as a boating enthusiast and boat race champion, giving credence to his expertise in boat mechanics (Figures 8-9).
The combined auto-and-marine business model appears to have been unique in Victoria during the period of significance. A search of the *Victoria Advocate* newspaper during the period of significance reveals other auto parts and service businesses, as well as other marine parts and service businesses – but no other business serving both markets. For example, Bernie’s Boats-Motors at 2102 N. Navarro Street (extant) claimed in their advertisements to be “Victoria’s Oldest And Largest Marine Dealer – Since 1950.” However, Bernie’s did not offer auto parts and service, and the business moved out of downtown by 1978. From around 1960 to 1965, newspaper advertisements also show Victoria Marine Supply at 508 E. Rio Grande Street (extant) competing with Bernhard Electric to provide parts and service for boats – but they did not provide auto parts and services either.

Around 1940, Paul Bernhard expanded his building, constructing the portion addressed as 105-07 E. Goodwin Avenue (Figure 2). By 1943, Bernhard began leasing out this portion of the building, while continuing to operate the Bernhard Electric Company in the original portion of the building (109 E. Goodwin Avenue). City directories from 1943 list Granberry Motor Sales occupying 107 E. Goodwin Avenue. Advertisements in the *Victoria Advocate* indicate that Granberry Motor sold a variety of new and used vehicles during the years that it occupied 107 E. Goodwin Avenue (1943-1951), ranging from ...Packard, Ford, and Buick sedans to Harley Davidson motorcycles. Granberry Motors also frequently sought skilled auto mechanics in the *Victoria Advocate*, suggesting that auto repairs and maintenance constituted a significant portion of their business. Around 1951, the Patek Motor Company became the new tenant in the space, remaining until around 1960.

Raymond Patek was born in Gonzales, Texas, in 1902. He and his wife Betty Cleo Patek moved to Victoria in 1935. With the military build-up in the early 1940s, Ray Patek became “one of the first civilians to be hired at Foster [Field],” and then went on to work as a service manager for the Goad Motor Company. The 1950 census lists Patek living on Guadalupe Street in Victoria and working as a Service Manager at a Motor Company. His own firm, the Patek Motor Company, began to advertise general auto repair from their location at 107 E. Goodwin Avenue beginning in 1951. The Patek Motor Company routinely advertised “General Auto Repair” during the years that the business occupied 107 E. Goodwin Avenue (1951-1960), also occasionally advertising sales of used vehicles.

Paul Bernhard and Ray Patek worked alongside one another in the Bernhard Electric Building until about 1958, when Bernhard died at age 74 of heart disease. Paul Bernhard’s son Wallace continued to operate his business from 109 E. Goodwin Avenue until 1986. Around 1960, though, documentation about the Patek Motor Company

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52 “Bernie’s Boats-Motors 11th Annual Boat Show [ad],” *Victoria Advocate*, Mar. 6, 1969, p. 20, from Newspapers.com. Note that Bernie’s Boats was managed by Terry Sattler, and research to date found no relationship to Paul Bernhard.


56 [Various ads], *Victoria Advocate*, 1943-1951, from Newspapers.com.


60 Various ads, *Victoria Advocate*.


dwindles, and the 105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue space was documented as vacant by 1962. It appears that Patek continued to work as a mechanic in the Victoria area and remained an active member of the National Guard into the 1970s (Figure 10). Meanwhile, during the mid-1960s, the Victoria Yellow & Checker Cab Company began leasing the northern portion of the building (105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue). The Yellow & Checker Cab Company continued to operate out of the property until 1986.

With the departure of both the Bernhard Electric Company and the Yellow & Checker Cab Company in 1986, the building fell into vacancy. A series of businesses leased the building for brief periods between 1986 and 2003, but none remained active for long. In 2004, the Victoria Performing Arts Center opened the Leo J. Welder Center for the Performing Arts on the property at 214 N. Main Street (formerly an abandoned department store). The Victoria Performing Arts Center then acquired the Bernhard Electric property at 103-109 E. Goodwin Avenue for use as an annex – storing props and costumes and serving as a workshop. Victoria College acquired both 214 N. Main Street and 103-109 E. Goodwin Avenue in 2012, continuing to use the properties as a performing arts center and annex. In 2017, Hurricane Harvey destroyed the roof of 103-109 E. Goodwin Avenue and caused extensive water damage (as described in Section 7), leading again to vacancy. Rehabilitation work began in 2022, funded in part by a grant from the National Park Service.

**Criterion A: Commerce**

**Bernhard Electric Company**

The Bernhard Electric Company provides a rare and significant illustration of Victoria’s auto-oriented development in the early-to-mid-twentieth century. The building’s original construction in 1930 dovetails with the discovery of oil in Victoria County and the resulting increase in auto sales and maintenance. In the 1920s and 1930s, the increased availability of gasoline and automobiles led to auto-oriented redevelopment of downtowns nationwide, especially along state and federal highway routes. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps show that, historically, downtown Victoria included a number of other filling stations, auto dealerships, and auto parts stores along E. Goodwin Avenue, N. Bridge Street, and W. Forrest Street (Figure 2). Today, few historic buildings associated with Victoria’s auto-oriented commercial development from that period remain. Among the many auto-oriented buildings that lined Goodwin Avenue on the 1949 Sanborn map, only two remain – the Bernhard Electric Building and an altered gas station at 301 Goodwin Avenue. The 1986 National Register Multiple Property Submission for Victoria listed a 1920 Magnolia Filling Station at 108 S. William Street, but that building is no longer extant. The 1926 Atzenhoffer Chevrolet dealership in the 100 block of West Constitution Street was demolished also, replaced by a bank tower in the 1980s. Historic newspapers advertise new and used cars from Great Western Auto Sales located at 104-106 W. Goodwin Avenue from around 1951 through 1955, but it’s now a parking garage. Only two known historic auto-related commercial building survive in downtown Victoria – the 1925 Texas Company Filling Station at 102 S. William Street, and building at 108 N. Liberty Street occupied by Western Auto from 1958 through around

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64 NRHP, Determination of Eligibility, Bernhard Electric Company, June 12, 2020.
69 *Victoria Advocate*, various dates, from Newspapers.com. Additional addresses with auto-oriented businesses on the 1949 Sanborn include 202-204 N. Bridge Street, 116-120 W. Forrest Street, and 108 N. Liberty Street. However, historic newspapers only document non-auto businesses at these addresses. Additional information regarding these addresses may be obtained through future research using hard copies of the Polk’s City Directory in the Local History Area at the Victoria Public Library (digital copies not available online currently).
1984. However, the Texas Company Filling Station example documents a different era in Victoria’s history, prior to the discovery of oil and the industrial boom. The building at 108 N. Liberty Street predates the Western Auto occupancy, as indicated by its presence on the 1949 Sanborn and its circa-1930 Streamlined Moderne style. In addition, the building at 108 N. Liberty Street displays numerous incompatible alterations, including stone veneer covering parts of the historic stucco exterior and concrete enclosure of window openings on the side façade. The Bernhard Electric Company building represents the most intact example of purpose-designed auto sales and service building in downtown Victoria. An advertisement announcing the opening of the building on June 20, 1930, explicitly connected the building to the spirit of modernism and local boosterism alive in Victoria at the time, stating:

Embodying practically all modern ideas for display, office and working space, the building which will house the well known electric company is one of the most up-to-date in South Texas. It is located at the corner of Goodwin Avenue and Liberty Street, fronting on both. The building is of hollow tile construction and was erected by Ed Wagner, building contractor.

The connection between industry and outdoor recreation also lends the property a unique local flavor. Throughout its 56-year operation, the Bernhard Electric Company routinely advertised not only mechanical equipment but also an understanding of local fishermen and sportsmen (Figure 11). Together, the associations with Victoria’s auto-related commercial historic context and the trend of recreational development yield significance under National Register Criterion A in the area of Commerce at the local level. The period of significance spans from 1930-1973.

71 “Grand Opening at Our New Location: 108 N. Liberty [ad],” Victoria Advocate, Jun. 18, 1958, p. 5. Note that name of the prior occupant of this address was not found in research to date.
Bibliography


Bernhard Electric Building, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas


Bernhard Electric Building, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

*Texas Almanac, 1941-1942* (Dallas: Dallas Morning News, 1942). From the Portal to Texas History crediting the Texas State Historical Association, [https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth117164](https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth117164).

*Texas Almanac, 1949-1950* (Dallas: Dallas Morning News, 1949). From the Portal to Texas History crediting the Texas State Historical Association, [https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth117167/m1/308/](https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth117167/m1/308/).


*Victoria, Tex*. [Map]. (Sanborn, 1885-1928), various sheets. From the University of Texas at Austin, [https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/v.html](https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/v.html).
Additional Documentation
Maps

Map 1. Victoria County, Texas.
Map 4. VICTORIA TIF 71880 EXEMPT PT OF LOT 4 BLOCK 129 (Property ID: 63273), Victoria, Victoria County, Texas. Victoria Central Appraisal District data accessed January 25, 2023. The boundary follows the current legal parcel and contains the area historically associated with the Bernhard Electric property.
Bernhard Electric Building, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

Figures

Figure 1. Aerial photo of downtown Victoria in 1930, facing west with the railroad line in the background. The future site of the Bernhard Electric Building (not visible in this photo) lies just beyond the borders of the photo in the right-hand foreground. Source: Victoria: A Journey Through Time, vol. I (Victoria: Victoria Advocate Publishing Co., 2007).
Figure 2. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map showing 105-109 E. Goodwin Street (outlined in yellow) and the surrounding blocks in 1949. Source: *Victoria, Tex. [Map] (Sanborn, 1928-1949)*, sheet 3, from ProQuest via Austin Public Libraries.
Figure 3. Photo of the Bernhard Electric Company Building in 1942, camera facing southwest. Source: Dmitri Kessel [photographer], *LIFE Magazine*, 1942.
Figure 4. Photo showing the Bernhard Electric Company Building in the background 1942, camera facing southwest. Source: Dmitri Kessel [photographer], *LIFE Magazine*, 1942.
Figure 5. Sketch of the current floorplan of the Bernhard Electric Building. Sources: Proposed “Leo J. Welder Annex Renovation” drawings, RMA Architects & Interior Designers, 11/20/2018, adapted by HHM to show current conditions.
Figure 6. Graph depicting the growth of Victoria’s population. Source: The Victoria Sesquicentennial, “Scrapbook,” 1824-1974 (n.p., ca. 1974), from the Victoria Public Library.
Figure 7. Map showing the town plat of Victoria in 1872, traversed diagonally by the railroad. Source: *Victoria [Texas] town proper* [map] (n.p., 1872-1883), from the Portal crediting the University of Texas at Arlington Library, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth190471.
Figure 8. Advertisement for the Bernhard Electric Company from 1931. Source: [Ad], *Victoria Advocate*, Apr. 5, 1931, p. 5.
Bernhard Electric Building, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

Figure 9. Photo of Paul Bernhard in 1956. Source: “Victoria in Review,” Victoria Advocate, Feb. 21, 1956, p. 22
Bernhard Electric Building, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

Figure 11. Advertisement for the Bernhard Electric Company from 1935. Source: [Ad], *Victoria Advocate*, Dec. 12, 1935, p. 4.
Photos

Photo 1. Oblique view of the Bernhard Electric Building, camera facing southwest.
Photo 2. East elevation, camera facing west.
Photo 3. Oblique view, camera facing southeast.
Photo 4. Oblique view of north elevation under the canopy, camera facing southwest.
Photo 5. View of the north elevation under the canopy, camera facing east.
Photo 6. View of the north elevation, camera facing south.
Photo 7. Oblique view of the south elevation, camera facing northwest.
Photo 8. View of the west elevation, camera facing northeast.
Photo 9. Interior view of the westernmost space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue (the original 1930 portion of the building), camera facing north.
Photo 10. Interior view of the middle space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing northwest.
Photo 11. Interior view of the easternmost space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing north.
Photo 12. Interior view of the easternmost space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing southeast.
Photo 13. Interior view of the westernmost space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing southwest.
Bernhard Electric Building, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

Photo 14. Interior view of the non-original storage room within the middle space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing southwest.
Photo 15. Interior view of the non-original bathrooms and kitchenette within the middle space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing east.
Photo 16. Interior view of the office space off of the easternmost space within 109 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing southeast.
Photo 17. Interior view of the office/vestibule within 105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue (the ca. 1940 addition), camera facing north.
Photo 18. Interior view of the open garage space within 105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing north.
Bernhard Electric Building, Victoria, Victoria County, Texas

Photo 19. Interior view of the open garage space within 105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing southeast.
Photo 20. Interior view of the open garage space within 105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue, camera facing northwest.
Photo 21. Interior view of the office/vestibule and non-original bathrooms within 105-107 E. Goodwin Avenue (the ca. 1940 addition), camera facing southwest.