

MP 2757



NPS Form 10-900

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

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: La Salle Monument  
Other name/site number: Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle Monument  
Name of related multiple property listing: Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial

2. Location

Street & number: State Highway 316 at Blind Bayou  
City or town: Indianola State: Texas County: Calhoun  
Not for publication:  Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

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

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

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

[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper

7/27/2018  
Date of Action

La Salle Monument, Indianola, Calhoun County, Texas

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

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

**Category of Property**

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

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

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

**6. Function or Use**

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

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

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification:** Other: Monument

**Principal Exterior Materials:** Stone/granite

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

La Salle Monument, Indianola, Calhoun County, Texas

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

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

**Period of Significance:** 1939

**Significant Dates:** 1939

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

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

**Architect/Builder:** Josset, Raoul (sculptor); Lavaggi, Ugo "Hugo" (carver); Nelson, Donald S. (architect)

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets 8-8 through 8-17)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheet 9-18 through 9-19)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

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

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## 10. Geographical Data

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

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 28.527361°N Longitude: -96.508641°W

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The monument is located at the terminus of TX 316 on a tear-drop-shaped parcel of land on the shore of Matagorda Bay. The nomination encompasses only the monument and the ground upon which it stands, an approximate area of 40 square feet.

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

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Bonnie Tipton Wilson, THC National Register Historian  
Organization: Texas Historical Commission  
Street & number: P.O. Box 12276  
City or Town: Austin State: TX Zip Code: 78711-2276  
Email: bonnie.wilson@thc.texas.gov  
Telephone: 512-463-6046  
Date: November 1, 2017

## Additional Documentation

- Maps** (see continuation sheets MAP-20 through MAP-21)
- Additional items** (see continuation sheets FIGURE-22 through FIGURE-26)
- Photographs** (see continuation sheets PHOTO-27 through PHOTO-31)

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**Photograph Log**

La Salle Monument  
Indianola, Calhoun County, Texas  
Photographed by Gregory Smith  
February 14, 2018

Photo 1: La Salle Monument southeast (front) elevation—camera faces northwest

Photo 2: Detail of La Salle Monument—camera faces northwest

Photo 3: La Salle Monument, northeast elevation—camera faces southwest.

Photo 4: Rear (northwest) elevation of the La Salle Monument—camera faces southeast.

Photo 5: West oblique of the La Salle Monument—camera faces east.

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

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

La Salle Monument, Indianola, Calhoun County, Texas

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## Description

The Rene Robert Cavelier Sieur de La Salle Monument is a 22-foot-tall pink Texas granite full-rounded and high-relief statuary figure. Constructed for the 1936 Texas Centennial, the La Salle Monument is at its original location on Matagorda Bay in Indianola, Calhoun County, Texas. It is within a tear-dropped-shaped parcel at the terminus of State Highway 316, built by the State of Texas to provide access to the commemorative property. The monument marks the approximate site where French explorer Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle landed in Texas in 1685. Sculptor Raoul Josset and architect Donald S. Nelson designed the monument that was dedicated in 1939. It retains a high degree of integrity and is in good condition.

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Calhoun County is located centrally on the Texas Gulf Coast. It is bounded by Victoria and Jackson counties (north), Refugio County (west), Matagorda County (east), and the Gulf of Mexico and Matagorda Island (south). Calhoun County's northeastern coast fronts Matagorda Bay, a major inlet of the Gulf, and Lavaca Bay. Considered a "ghost town" since a hurricane obliterated it in 1886, Indianola is an unincorporated rural beach community in Calhoun County with recreation areas and scattered vacation homes. It is identified on the map as being on Matagorda Bay at Powderhorn Bayou, but the port city once extended three miles northwest to Blind Bayou.<sup>1</sup> The closest city, Port Lavaca is 15 miles away by car, and SH 316 (South Ocean Drive) is the only road to Indianola. The area that encompassed Indianola has also been called Magnolia Beach since the 1920s.

The Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle Monument (hereafter "La Salle Monument") is at its original location a 0.66-acre teardrop-shaped parcel on State Highway TX-316 between Matagorda Bay and Blind Bayou (Map 2.) A gravel turnout provides vehicular access from SH 316 around the parcel, between the monument and the shoreline. Surrounded by a concrete slab, the La Salle Monument faces southeast and sidewalks extend out from the southwest and northeast elevations.

A summary description of the La Salle monument in *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence: The Report of the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations*, published by the Commission of Control in 1938, reads as follows:

The entire memorial is erected on a pier, slab, and cap reinforced concrete foundation, designed as a rigid frame, supporting a rectangular base of granite upon which is erected a tapered wedge-shaped shaft of granite. The shaft is composed of four pieces, on which a combination of full-rounded and relief sculpture is carved. The inscription appears on the lower block of the shaft. The entire memorial is of Kingsland pink granite, hand-hammered finish. The stylized portraiture of La Salle, sculptured by Raoul Josset and carved in granite by Ugo Lavaggi, is fourteen feet in height; the entire memorial rises twenty-two feet. The Commission allocated \$10,000 for the monument, designed by Donald Nelson, architect.<sup>2</sup>

Designed to represent La Salle's landing at Matagorda Bay in 1685, Josset's portrayed the French explorer standing with his head turned east, gazing towards the beach. La Salle's gloved right hand is placed on the hilt of a 9-foot-tall sword and the left hand rests below the handle guard on the blade. La Salle is depicted with his signature long curly hair and mustache. La Salle is shown wearing a floor-length collared cape, gloves, and boots. The cape obscures his left leg, but the right is shown to step slightly forward to the tapered edge of the monument shaft.

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<sup>1</sup> TX 316 terminates at the La Salle monument and continues south as S. Ocean Dr.

<sup>2</sup> Texas and Harold Schoen, eds., *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence; the Report of the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations*, (Austin: Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, 1938):104. This publication is available at: <http://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/preserve/TexasCentennial1938.pdf>

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The monument base is inscribed as follows:

[southwest elevation]  
RENE ROBERT CAVELIER  
SIEUR DE LA SALLE  
BORN IN ROUEN, FRANCE, NOVEMBER 22,  
1643 \* CAME TO CANADA IN 1666 \* \* \*  
FOUNDED A FIRST SETTLEMENT NEAR  
MONTREAL \* \* LED SEVERAL EXPEDITIONS  
ON THE GREAT LAKES AND THE OHIO  
AND ILLINOIS RIVERS \* COMPLETED THE  
EXPLORATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI 1682  
ON JULY 24, 1684 LA SALLE SAILED  
FROM FRANCE TO ESTABLISH A COLONY  
AT THE MOUTH OF THE MISSISSIPPI \* \*  
LANDED AT MATAGORDA BAY FEBRUARY 15  
1685 \* THERE ESTABLISHED FORT ST. LOUIS  
WHILE ON HIS WAY TO CANADA HE WAS  
MURDERED NEAR THE TRINITY RIVER MARCH  
19, 1687

[northeast elevation]  
RENE ROBERT CAVELIER  
SIEUR DE LA SALLE  
A GENTLEMAN BUT NOT A COURTIER \* A  
PROUD INDEPENDENT YET TIMID NATURE \*  
AN EXPLORER OF BOLD VISION AN UN-  
TIRING ENGERY

LA SALLE'S COLONY ON MATAGORDA BAY  
GAVE THE UNITED STATES ITS FIRST  
CLAIM TO TEXAS AS A PART OF THE  
LOUISIANA PURCHASE

“AMERICA OWES HIM AN ENDURING MEMORY,  
FOR, IN THIS MASCULINE FIGURE, SHE  
SEES THE PIONEER WHO GUIDED HER TO  
THE POSSESSION OF HER RICHEST HERITAGE.”  
FRANCIS PARKMAN

### **Integrity**

The La Salle Monument retains exceptional integrity and is in very good condition. It retains intergrity of materials, design, and workmanship as there have been no changes or damage inflicted to the statue since its dedication. The workmanship of a skilled stone carvers is evident in markings seen at close-range. It retains integrity of location at its original dedication site on Matagorda Bay beach in Indianola. It retains integrity of its setting on the shoreline in a remote area of the county. The statue conveys the feeling of a commemorative monument created to memorialize Rene Robert Cavalier Sieur de La Salle, and its association with the 1936 Texas Centennial is intact.

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### Statement of Significance

The 22-foot-tall Rene Robert Cavellier Sieur de La Salle Monument in Indianola, a major project of the 1936 Texas Centennial, is one of the most artistically-distinct products of the statewide celebration of Texas history. Sculptor Raoul Josset and architect Donald S. Nelson designed the memorial, one of 45 Centennial properties classified as a "monument," to commemorate the French explorer's landing place in Texas. Completed during the height of his career, Josset's hybrid high relief and full-rounded sculptural interpretation of La Salle is unique for its stylized composition compared to the bronze neo-Classical statues erected for the centenary. The scale and quality of La Salle are made more remarkable by its remote location on the Texas Gulf Coast. Carved in pink granite by master carver Ugo "Hugo" Lavaggi, the monument is the largest figurative sculpture produced for the statewide celebration. For two years, a controversy over property owner rights delayed and altered the original, modest plan until a statue of La Salle was awarded to Calhoun County in 1938. Dedicated the following year on a remote stretch of beach at La Salle's alleged 1685 landing point (later the port city of Indianola), it was the last commemorative monument erected for the Texas Centennial.

The property is nominated to the National Register at the state level of significance under the multiple property submission *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*. It is eligible under Criterion A in the area of Social History as a product of the concerted statewide effort to commemorate historic persons and events important to Texas history in the 1930s. The monument was commissioned as part of a major Depression-era public arts project and is significant in the area of Art as an important work by sculptor Raoul Josset. The property meets Criterion Consideration F (Commemorative Properties) because it is significant as a work of art that reflects early 20<sup>th</sup> century interest in recognizing historic subjects throughout Texas, which culminated in the publicly-funded statewide Texas Centennial. The La Salle monument is located at its original site on the beach of Matagorda Bay, which represents the historic landing point of the French explorer, and it retains excellent integrity.

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### Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle (1643-1687) and Fort St. Louis<sup>3</sup>

Born in Rouen, France on November 22, 1643, Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle first landed in North America in 1666. In Canada, La Salle profited from investment in the fur trade but sold his holdings in 1669 to explore the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. Along the way, he established trading posts and expanded France's North American territorial claims. In 1682, he reached the mouth of the Mississippi River and claimed all lands drained by it for the French King, Louis XIV, and named it La Louisiane (Louisiana).

Upon his return to France, the royal government approved La Salle to establish a colony near the mouth of the Mississippi, and he voyaged there through the Gulf of Mexico. La Salle missed his intended destination, instead landing 180 French colonists at Texas' Matagorda Bay on February 20, 1685. Historians believe he landed at what later became Indianola after one of his four ships was wrecked crossing the Cavallo Pass bar. He used the site as a temporary camp for transporting colonists and goods inland to a settlement, historically called Fort St. Louis, on Garcitas Creek in present-day Victoria County. La Salle explored the surrounding territory looking for the Mississippi River, and on his third outing in March 1687, a disenchanted companion murdered him.

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<sup>3</sup> This section derived from *Handbook of Texas Online*, Robert S. Weddle, "La Salle, Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur De," accessed December 07, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fla04>; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Robert S. Weddle, "La Salle Expedition," accessed December 07, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/upl01>; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Robert S. Weddle, "La Salle's Texas Settlement," accessed December 07, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/uel07>.



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Misfortune plagued La Salle's Texas settlement. Half of the colonists died from exposure, disease, or poor diet within the first six months, and the only remaining ship, *Belle*, wrecked during a storm in Matagorda Bay in 1686. In 1688, a band of Karankawas ambushed Fort St. Louis; only a few children survived. Two years later Spanish explorer Alonso de Leon discovered the ruined settlement on the right bank of Garcitas Creek above its mouth in Lavaca Bay. The Spaniards established a *presidio* (fort) Nuestra Señora de Loreto de la Bahía (hereafter "La Bahía") on the site of Fort St. Louis in 1721, and it remained there until 1726.

### **Brief History of Indianola, Calhoun County<sup>4</sup>**

Permanent non-Native American settlement began in present-day Calhoun County as early as 1825 when Martin De Leon, a Mexican *empresario*, established a ranch near the former site of Fort St. Louis/La Bahía. Colonization increased after the Texas Revolution, and Anglo immigrants established port communities on Lavaca and Matagorda bays. One settler, Sam Addison White, found opportunity to develop his property when he agreed to land and encamp newly-arrived German settlers on the portion of his land that faced Matagorda Bay. The *Adelsverein* (German Emigration Company) transported Germans to Texas in 1844, and White's property, Indian Point, was the designated landing area before the immigrants moved inland. Some German families settled at Indian Point, and the town grew because of subsequent swells of immigration to the bay shore. In 1846, the State of Texas organized Calhoun County from parts of Victoria, Jackson, and Matagorda counties. The same year, White and William M. Cook incorporated Indian Point and platted lots for sale. As the town grew, Indian Point encompassed approximately 3 miles from Blind Bayou to Powderhorn Bayou. In 1849, property owners voted to change its name to Indianola, which had a "more musical sound" than Indian Point.<sup>5</sup>

Indianola's deep-water port access attracted investment, and it developed into wholesale center capable of supplying inland communities with groceries, lumber, hardware, and other provisions. Charles Morgan, a shipping and railroad magnate, chose Indianola as the terminus for his New York-based steamship line in 1849. Two overland stagecoach routes, the Chihuahua Trail and San Diego Road, stopped in town, and the first rail line was established in 1871. Indianola, known to some as the "Mother of Western Texas," was second to Galveston as the most important port in Texas until 1875. A hurricane struck the Gulf Coast at Indianola in 1875, at the peak of its economic prosperity, and it devastated the infrastructure and resulted in the deaths of an estimated 300 people. Many of its 5,000 inhabitants moved inland to neighboring towns, but a few rebuilt the port city. In 1886, another hurricane struck that, along with massive fire outbreak, obliterated Indianola. The site was abandoned the following year, and Lavaca (present-day Port Lavaca) was named the new county seat. In 1930, a group of former Indianola residents organized the Old Indianola Association to "preserve the historic and social traditions of the ill-fated town."<sup>6</sup>

### **Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Commemoration Efforts**

Since the 1860s, scholars have chronicled La Salle's North American expeditions with particular interest in La Salle's impact on Texas history. Historians argued the short-lived French settlement at Fort St. Louis prompted Spain to re-double its efforts to occupy modern-day Texas (its northern territory) and thus set the course for the next three centuries of state history. Francis Parkman's *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West* (1869), was a one of the

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<sup>4</sup> This section derived from Brownson Malsch, "Indianola, TX," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hvi11>, accessed November 30, 2017; Gary Ralston, "A Brief History of Indianola, Texas," Indianola Texas, <http://www.indianolatx.com/history.html>, accessed November 30, 2017; and Brownson Malsch, *Indianola: The Mother of Western Texas* (Austin: State House Press, 1988)1-43.

<sup>5</sup> Brownson, *Indianola*, 37.

<sup>6</sup> "Old Indianola Citizens to Hold Meeting," *San Patricio County News*, April 17, 1930.

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first monographs on the subject, and it remained popular through the 1930s.<sup>7</sup> The La Salle monument inscription includes a quote from Parkman's book. Few early historians, however, attempted to confirm Texas places linked with La Salle, and they accepted that the French settlement/Presidio La Bahía site was on the Lavaca River in present-day Jackson County.

In 1914, Dr. Herbert E. Bolton published findings based on Spanish documents he discovered in Mexico City that referenced several places associated with La Salle's Texas expedition (Figure 1).<sup>8</sup> He found a 1690 survey of Matagorda Bay on which Joseph Cardenas, a Spanish naval engineer, identified Fort St. Louis/Presidio La Bahía on Garcitas Creek off Lavaca Bay in present-day Victoria County, which borders Jackson County.<sup>9</sup> The spot aligned with Claude Keeran's ranch land, said to have "long been the object of attention of treasure seekers," and Bolton found archaeological remnants of the French colony and Spanish presidio there in 1913.<sup>10</sup> Despite his evidence, some Texans maintained the earlier belief that the historic site was in Jackson County. From the map and Cardenas' diary, Bolton also ascertained the approximate site at Indianola on Matagorda Bay where La Salle made landfall. He re-stated the findings to the *Victoria Advocate* in 1937:

Calhoun County, also created from Victoria County, once was thought to contain the site of La Salle's colony...near Magnolia Beach. That point, however, is in fact directly connected with the French settlement, for 'there,' Dr. Bolton quoted Cardenas' diary, 'we found the place where M. de la Salle had made the barracks to lodge his men...in order thence to conduct them to his settlement.'<sup>11</sup>

Bolton's investigation inspired ordinary Texans to mark the historic sites the research identified. The first proposal for a commemorative monument to La Salle was made by the Texas chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1919. Completed in 1930, the D.A.R. erected a 7.5-foot-tall granite statue of La Salle in Navasota, where according to Bolton, marked the vicinity "where traitorous companions slew him."<sup>12</sup> Another group gathered on the Keeran Ranch in 1925 to see the remains of Fort St. Louis with hopes to later fence it in and erect a monument. Members of the Keeran Family joined the short-lived movement, but nothing came of the project.<sup>13</sup>

A La Salle statue in Indianola, a promotional product of a failed land development for Magnolia Beach, preceded the Navasota memorial dedication by two years. Developers commissioned San Antonio sculptor Nora Gammel Sweetland to produce a memorial for a planned park outside the old Indianola Cemetery for the Bayside Beach subdivision, located on the old Indianola townsite (Figure 2). The shellcrete statue of La Salle planting a sword and a wooden cross into Texas soil was dedicated Labor Day 1928.<sup>14</sup> Hurricane winds broke Sweetland's statue in half sometime during

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<sup>7</sup> Gene R. Tucker, "La Salle Lands in Texas: La Salle and the Historians," *East Texas Historical Journal* (Vol. 48, no.1 2010): 40.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert Eugene Bolton (1870-1953), historian, developed an interest in borderlands history as a professor at the University of Texas. In 1902, he started researching archives in Mexico City. Though he had moved on from Texas, between 1908 and 1915, Bolton produced many articles covering subjects related to early Texas exploration and settlement. As early as 1913, he received publicity for his research on Fort St. Louis. One resulting article explaining his findings is the following: Herbert E. Bolton, "The Location of La Salle's Colony on the Gulf of Mexico," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 2, no. 2 (September 1915): 165-182.

<sup>9</sup> Map 3 shows the physical relationship between Victoria, Jackson, and Calhoun counties. The proximity and numerous archaeological sites fueled speculation over locations of La Salle's settlement and landing.

<sup>10</sup> "Early Colony on Garcitas River," *The Courier-Gazette (McKinney-Texas)*, September 3, 1914; Site of La Salle's Colony and Place Where He was Killed Found by Historian," *Austin Statesman*, July 8, 1914.

<sup>11</sup> "Noted Historian Removes Doubt of Exact Site of Fort St. Louis," *Victoria Daily Advocate*, March 14, 1937.

<sup>12</sup> Llano monuments maker Frank Teich created the La Salle statue in Navasota. "Sidelights from the Navasota Unveiling," *The Eagle* (Bryan, Texas), March 7, 1930.

<sup>13</sup> "Will Mark Spot of First Settlement," *The Galveston Daily News*, December 8, 1925.

<sup>14</sup> Shellcrete is a concrete-like material made of quicklime, sands, broken shells, and water that was a common building material

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the 1930s, and vandals made off with La Salle's decapitated head; La Salle's boots are the only remnants of Sweetwater's statue (Figure 3.)<sup>15</sup>

### The La Salle Monument

The 22-foot-tall La Salle monument in Indianola, the largest sculptural figure commissioned for the 1936 Centennial, was originally intended to be an 8-foot-tall slab memorial at the site of Fort St. Louis in Victoria County. Texas counties participated in the Centennial by commemorating historically-significant places and people within their respective communities. Projects—such as monuments, markers, museums, and replicas—were a way to drive heritage tourism from the Central Exposition in Dallas across Texas. In addition to the economic incentive for marking historic sites, the state-sanctioned Centennial properties also legitimized the role a local community played within the larger history of Texas progress and success. Consequently, counties competed to demonstrate to the Advisory Board of Historians local sites of historical significance to receive a proportional cut of the \$750,000 Centennial allocation.

Calhoun County, represented by members of the Old Indianola Association, travelled to Austin in June 1935 where Father D.M. Buckley and H.G. Hartzog proposed two projects to the three-member Advisory Board of Texas Historians: funds for a state park at the site of Old Indianola and \$2,000 for a museum in memory of La Salle.<sup>16</sup> The Calhoun delegation was among five groups that pursued funding that day for a commemorative memorial to a site associated with La Salle. Undeterred by the 1930 monument at La Salle's "burial site" in Navasota, three groups proposed memorials to La Salle's burial place in their respective counties. By the third presentation, historical board chairman Louis Kemp produced an audible sigh, saying "[La Salle] can't be buried in all those places."<sup>17</sup> The same day, a large delegation from Victoria County submitted a "modest" \$40,000 request that included a \$15,000 allotment to construct a miniature replica of Fort St. Louis/La Bahía in Victoria.<sup>18</sup> They acknowledged interest in marking the actual site of Fort St. Louis but were doubtful the Keeran Family would sell the historic portion of their property or allow an "imposing monument" placed there.<sup>19</sup>

In October 1935, the Commission of Control announced awards for statewide projects funded by the Centennial appropriation. It notified Calhoun County that four historical markers and one highway marker would be erected there, including one for Indianola.<sup>20</sup> Although the Advisory Board of Historians recognized Indianola as a legitimate site associated with the La Salle's 1685 landing, they preferred marking the actual site of Fort St. Louis in Victoria County.<sup>21</sup> Board chairman Kemp was unconcerned by the Keeran Family's attitude towards erecting a commemorative

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used on the Texas Gulf Coast. Although the material was able to withstand humid coastal conditions, the shellcrete memorial was not strong enough to withstand hurricane-strength winds. Moore, "Shellcrete at the Fulton Mansion," Volz O'Connell Hutson, <http://voharchitects.com/shellcrete-at-the-fulton-mansion/> (accessed November 29, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> "Texas Statue Will Honor La Salle," *San Antonio Light*, April 11, 1928; Henry Wolff, "Statue Was a Part of Land Development," *Victoria Advocate*, August 31, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Advisory Board of Texas Historians, "Bulletin No. 3," James F. Dobie Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; "\$10,000 Monument to Be Erected to La Salle Memory," *Victoria Advocate*, January 16, 1938.

<sup>17</sup> S. Raymond Brooks, "Texas Topics," *Austin Statesman*, July 2, 1935.

<sup>18</sup> Victoria's delegate Leopold Morris argued the county "was the very cradle of Texas civilization" and yet their fiscal request was modest in proportion to its glory. "Victoria County's Historical Claims for Allotments of Texas Centennial Funds," *Victoria Advocate*, July 3, 1935.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Historical markers designate the following places/people in Calhoun County: Site of the Town of Indianola, Sylvanus Hatch, Cox's Point, Site of the Town of Linnville, Jefferson Beaumont, and Calhoun County (highway marker).

<sup>21</sup> The 1935 Report of the Advisory Board of Historians erroneously recommended the Fort St. Louis monument for Calhoun County. The correction was recorded in Commission of Control minutes on October 31, 1935. Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, Advisory Board of Texas Historians, "Reports of the Advisory Board of Texas Historians to the

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memorial on the property. He said it was “a world-wide historic spot and regardless of how far removed from society and regardless of its inaccessibility, in time a State Park will be built there and a State Highway...will lead to it.”<sup>22</sup> To that end, the board unanimously recommended a \$1,000 granite slab monument featuring a bronze plaque to jointly commemorate Fort St. Louis and La Bahía (Figure 4).<sup>23</sup>

The Keeran Family recognized the historical and archaeological value of the Fort St. Louis/ La Bahía site, and they initially supported a monument. However, they objected to Kemp’s idea to build highway over their pasture that, they said, was already threatened by relic-hunters and cattle thieves.<sup>24</sup> The Victoria County Centennial Advisory Board and the Calhoun county judge, acting as mediators between the Keeran Family and the Advisory Board of Historians, requested the Commission of Control cancel the \$1,000 marker.<sup>25</sup> When the Commission complied, Kemp argued that “the site of Fort St. Louis is more important as a historical shrine than as a cow pasture,” and amended the proposed project to a small, historical marker. This, too, was rejected by the Keeran Family.<sup>26</sup> The *Victoria Advocate* captured all the failed attempts of state and local Centennial authorities to resolve the matter, including a period of heated finger-pointing as to which party was more devoted to memorializing the French explorer.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps in self-defense, Kemp recommended the Commission of Control approve a grander, “more imposing,” project in December 1936: a

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Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations,” Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, 22; Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, Minutes, October 31, 1935, Pat M. Neff Collection, Interim Years 1920-1947, The Texas Collection, Baylor University.

<sup>22</sup> Advisory Board of Historians, Louis W. Kemp to Foik and Dobie, November 14, 1936, Dobie Papers.

<sup>23</sup> The State Board of Control commissioned Austin-based architecture firm Page & Southerland and sculptor Raoul Josset to design the \$1,000 Fort St. Louis/La Bahía, and others within the same scheme. Despite the ongoing controversy, they produced the monument blueprint on June 13, 1936. Having not been paid for the work by February 1937, Page & Southerland submitted a bill to the Board of Control for the cancelled monument design. Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, Minutes, February 12, 1937, Dobie Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>24</sup> They argued that a road would provide easy access for looters “and, in this day of automobile cattle thievery, would bring about serious trespassing by irresponsible persons.” The Victoria County Centennial Advisory Board supported the Keerans’ and further believed a highway to the remote site on Garcitas Creek was expensive, if not impassable. “The Other Side of the La Salle Controversy: Centennial Chairman Defends Victoria County,” *Victoria Advocate*, December 4, 1936; “Victoria Committee Member Writes Texas History Board,” *Victoria Advocate*, December 6, 1936; Ed Kilman, “La Salle Controversy Near End as New Offers Are Made,” *Victoria Advocate*, December 6, 1936.

<sup>25</sup> Between 1935 and 1939, it was not unusual for Centennial projects to be altered or new commemorative properties suggested at the cancellation of another. National Register of Historic Places, Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial MPS Texas, Statewide, National Register of Historic Places nomination, 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Like the first monument proposed, the \$200 historical marker went through the production process. The Rodriguez Brothers Monuments Company, who constructed and installed most Centennial historical monuments, reported they were turned away by the Keerans saying they were told, “when he and his family got ready to mark the spot they would do so in a matter befitting its importance and of which the state would be proud.” Eventually it was placed in Inez, a small community in Victoria County on the border of Jackson County, 13 miles from the historic site. “The Other Side of the La Salle Controversy: Centennial Chairman Defends Victoria County,” *Victoria Advocate*, December 4, 1936

<sup>27</sup> Between May 1936 and December 1936, the Keerans agreed to and subsequently rejected various deals in which the state would take title, or lease, acres directly surrounding the property. According to the paper, unidentified “loyal, public-spirited and patriotic” citizens influenced the landowner, but it is not clear in what way. The *Houston Post* published incendiary articles that stiffened the Keerans’ opposition to a monument. It painted the controversy as a battle of interests between wealthy cattlemen versus patriotic pilgrims, and supported the state’s eminent domain rights. The Victoria Centennial advisory board also complicated the controversy as they preferred a large monument placed a conspicuous public space in Victoria. Ultimately, they got their wish and the Josset-designed Victoria monument was erected in Memorial Park. Ed Kilman for *The Houston Post*, “‘Posted—No Trespassing’ Sign on Ranch May Deprive Victoria of Costly Shrine,” in *Victoria Advocate*, December 2, 1936; “The Other Side of the La Salle Controversy: Centennial Chairman Defends Victoria County,” *Victoria Advocate*, December 4, 1936; “Victoria Committee Member Writes Texas History Board,” *Victoria Advocate*, December 6, 1936.

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\$12,000 bronze statue of La Salle at the site of Fort St. Louis/La Bahía on the condition the Texas Highway Department condemn land to build a highway to it.<sup>28</sup>

As the scale of the project increased, so did the controversy. Jackson County renewed its claim as home to the “real” location of Fort St. Louis, and they lobbied the Commission of Control for the La Salle monument. The *Victoria Advocate* published competing historical scholarship and invited historians to debunk Jackson County’s research. It reproduced Bolton’s evidence, including statements about La Salle’s landing at Indianola, and unintentionally opened the door for Calhoun County to get the monument.<sup>29</sup>

It was fortuitous time for the Old Indianola Association, which was nearing its own goal to establish a state park at Indianola, and they seized the opportunity. They asked the Advisory Board of Historians to consider the proposed park as the site for the monument to La Salle that, conveniently, “would also perpetuate the memory of Indianola.”<sup>30</sup> Exhausted by the almost two-year-long controversy, disgusted by “selfish interests in Victoria County,” and moved to memorialize the historic figure, the Advisory Board of Historians conceded. On May 15, 1937, Kemp notified the Commission of Control the Keeran Family flatly refused any road be built to Fort St. Louis. “In view of the above facts,” he said, “your Historical Board are going to recommend... a bronze statue of La Salle costing \$10,000 be erected near Port Lavaca in Calhoun County in the approximate vicinity of where La Salle landed.”<sup>31</sup>

On May 16, 1937, the Old Indianola Association convened for its annual meeting, predicted by the *Victoria Advocate* to be “unusually interesting” that year. The agenda included a dedication ceremony for the Indianola townsite Centennial marker, a ceremony that Kemp attended with other prominent local men. The association presented Kemp with a formal petition for the monument, and many in attendance provided testimony in support of the La Salle monument project.<sup>32</sup> A committee formed to raise funds and secure title from the Westoff Family in Jackson County for the land on which the proposed monument would later stand. The Commission of Control formally-approved the \$10,000 monument for Old Indianola at its meeting in January 1938.<sup>33</sup>

The Commission of Control entrusted the contract for La Salle to sculptor Raoul Jossset and Donald S. Nelson. The two men, long-time friends originally hired for the Central Centennial Exposition in Dallas, previously collaborated on three monuments and one statue for the statewide Centennial.<sup>34</sup> Calhoun County rejoiced at the news of Jossset’s

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<sup>28</sup>Ed Kilman for *The Houston Post*, “La Salle Controversy Near End as New Offers Are Made,” in *Victoria Advocate*, December 6, 1936.

<sup>29</sup>Since 1934, the Jackson County Centennial Advisory Board claimed the archeological sites of Fort St. Louis/La Bahía were located within its territory, and rejected Dr. Bolton’s published study claiming it for Victoria County on the Keeran Ranch. When the Keeran Family rejected numerous plans to erect a monument, Jackson County produced documents in support of its claims and presented it to the Advisory Board of Historians. It appears the board accepted the new evidence and deliberated over the findings. In response, the *Victoria Advocate* published two, two-page spreads to debunk Jackson County’s theories. It included the following statement from Dr. Bolton, “Calhoun County...near Magnolia Beach...is in fact directly connected with the French settlement.” Ultimately, the board of historians concurred with contemporary scholars and supported Bolton’s findings. “New and Old Facts Relating to Location of La Salle’s Colony,” *Victoria Advocate*, April 4, 1937.

<sup>30</sup>“346 Indianolans and Descendants at Meeting,” *Victoria Advocate*, May 17, 1937.

<sup>31</sup>Paul J. Foik to Louis W. Kemp, April 27, 1937, Foik Papers, Catholic Archives of Texas; Kemp to the Commission of Control, May 15, 1937, Dobie Papers.

<sup>32</sup>“346 Indianolans and Descendants at Meeting,” *Victoria Advocate*, May 17, 1937.

<sup>33</sup>“\$10,000 Monument to be Erected to La Salle Memory,” *Victoria Advocate*, January 16, 1938.

<sup>34</sup>The Commission of Control terminated, by law, on December 31, 1938 and the State Board of Control carried all un-finished Centennial projects to completion in 1939. It is likely that information played into the Commission’s decision to choose Nelson and Jossset, and they trusted them to complete the work on-time and with little oversight. In addition to the La Salle monument, Nelson and Jossset completed the following projects together for the statewide Centennial: Amon B. King’s Men monument (Refugio County), Fannin’s Men monument (Goliad County), Mier Expedition monument (Fayette County), and George C.

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commission: “This monument is expected to be a credit to France as well as Texas and the United States.”<sup>35</sup> No updates were published between the site inspection in February 1938 and its dedication in May 1939. Josset created the La Salle model in his Dallas studio and hired Ugo Lavaggi to carve it from Texas pink granite, not bronze. The Commission of Control and Calhoun County worked with the Texas Highway Department to approve \$50,000 in state funding for a thoroughfare from Highway 27 to the La Salle monument. Not until July 1939, after the dedication, did the highway department lay the first stretch from Port Lavaca finally “giving a hard surface road to Old Indianola” (Figure 7.)<sup>36</sup>

The Old Indianola Association dedicated the La Salle monument on May 21, 1939 (Figure 5). Completed more than three years after the Advisory Board of Historians recommended the original project, it was the last monument erected for the 1936 Centennial. A reported 2,000 citizens traveled to the remote locale from Port Lavaca by way of the unimproved county road. Dr. Marcel Moraud, head of the Department of Romance Languages at Rice University and a recognized scholar of 17<sup>th</sup>-century French exploration of Texas, delivered the keynote address. Mrs. Grace Montier Sells unveiled the 22-foot-tall monument. Its inscription, written by Kemp, included a quote from scholar Francis Parkman’s 1869 book, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West*: “America owes him an enduring memory, for, in this masculine figure, she sees the pioneer who guided her to the possession of her richest heritage.”<sup>37</sup>

### Significance in the Area of Art

The 22-foot-tall Rene Robert Cavellier Sieur de La Salle monument in Indianola, a major project of the 1936 Texas Centennial, is one of the most artistically-distinct products of the statewide celebration of Texas history. Josset’s hybrid high relief/full-rounded sculptural interpretation of La Salle is unique for its stylized composition compared with most public art erected for the Centennial monument program. Furthermore, its scale and quality of craftsmanship are remarkable given its isolated location on the shores of Matagorda Bay on the Texas Gulf Coast.

There is no modern scholarship nor contemporary critique on the artistic merits of monuments and statues erected under the statewide Centennial public art program. Thus far, attention has focused on the exhibits and sculptural ornaments created for the central Centennial Exposition in Dallas. To most Americans, the “Texas Centennial” was the 1936 central exposition in Dallas, and nationwide publications only reviewed Centennial art that was showcased there. The statewide public art program, however, resulted in the sporadic construction of commemorative statues between 1937 and 1939 in remote areas of Texas when national interest in the event likely waned. The La Salle monument, erected three years after the Centennial celebration, was also isolated from metropolitan centers of artistic criticism. Furthermore, Josset’s career as a civic-commissioned and architectural sculptor meant he did not exhibit his work for review.

Although heritage tourism was a major economic incentive for holding the Centennial, it was not unusual for the Centennial Commission to erect commemorative properties in remote places. The Texas Highway Department, with its own centenary agenda, undertook a massive highway building program during the 1930s. On most occasions, the two commissions collaborated to place monuments in conspicuous places to attract passing motorists. The Advisory Board of Historians preferred erecting memorials at the historic sites commemorated, and sometimes recommended such placement at the expense of accessibility. Subsequently, grave and historical markers appeared on private land, and monuments were erected off the beaten path. La Salle, the largest sculptural figure produced for the Centennial, is also arguably, the most isolated commemorative property. Located 15 miles by car from the nearest city on the Gulf Coast,

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Childress statue (Washington County).

<sup>35</sup> “Inspect Statue Site,” *Victoria Advocate*, February 6, 1938.

<sup>36</sup> “Work on Road to Indianola Starts, Leads to Statue,” *Victoria Advocate*, July 14, 1939.

<sup>37</sup> Schoen, eds., 104.

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the monument was erected in a hurricane-prone region known for wiping towns off the map. The Texas Highway Department constructed a paved road (SH 316) to the monument in 1939, but the area would never develop because of hurricane threats (Figure 7).<sup>38</sup>

Josset's stylized depiction of La Salle presented the French explorer through a unique composition and in heroic proportions. The 22-foot-tall wedge-shaped slab does not fully contain the 14-foot-figure, the largest portrait representation created for the Centennial. Josset presented La Salle's head and shoulders in full-rounded sculpture, but the body was carved in high-relief, a method in which a sculptural figure projects significantly from its attached background.<sup>39</sup> Many of Josset's Centennial commissions exhibit relief techniques, but none are used this way. Historian Dr. Light Cummins observed that the bronze Centennial statues "hark back to the artistic style of the Beaux Arts neo-classicism that centered in the City Beautiful movement."<sup>40</sup> The granite-carved La Salle monument is more modern with fewer details than the intricate bronze figures. Notable monuments that compare in composition and style to La Salle are also Josset's works—Amon B. King's Men (Refugio County), the Mier Expedition monument angel (Fayette County), and the George Childress statue (Washington County)—and Leo Friedlander's Pioneer Woman monument in Denton is comparable in scale.

Although stylistically-unique as a work Centennial art, Josset's intent to represent heroic versions of historic Texans was in line with other approved monuments. One observer aptly noted Josset infused themes of pride, beauty, and possibility in his sculptures.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, when asked about his *Spirit of the Centennial* statue for the Dallas exposition, Josset said, "I have tried to portray, in the form of a graceful and beautiful woman, all the characteristics which have gone to make the Centennial possible — the bravery and courage of the people, the artistic effort put forth, the endurance and stamina necessary to see the job through."<sup>42</sup> The La Salle monument embodies Josset's intent and artfully represents the French explorer.

### **Raoul Jean Josset (1899-1957)<sup>43</sup>**

"Frenchman by birth, American by law, and Texan by preference," Raoul Josset, the most prolific sculptor of Texas Centennial monuments, was born in Fours, Nièvre, France on December 9, 1899.<sup>44</sup> Educated at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and winner of the prestigious Prix de Rome, Josset also apprenticed under French sculptor Émile-Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929). He immigrated to Chicago in 1927 and remained in the United States for the rest of his life. Josset's career gained momentum in the early 1930s, and his aesthetic, influenced by French Art Deco and classical sculpture, was popular to American architects. His early commissions in Chicago included architectural decorations on the Palmolive building (1929), the Carbon & Carbide building (1929), and at the Century of Progress International Exposition (1933).

During this period, he was introduced to architect Donald Nelson and the two collaborated on projects for Chicago's Century of Progress fair. On Nelson's recommendation, architect George Dahl invited Josset to Texas in 1935 to create commemorative statues for the Central Centennial Exposition at Fair Park in Dallas. The Texas Centennial was the most intensely-creative period of Josset's career. Upon completion of his commissions at Fair Park in 1936, the State

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<sup>38</sup> As of 2017, the Texas Department of Transportation and Calhoun County battled erosion to the shoreline next to La Salle that was washed away by hurricane Harvey.

<sup>39</sup> High relief has been historically used for building ornamentation. For Josset, it was a comfortable medium because his career included much architectural work.

<sup>40</sup> Light Townsend Cummins, Ph.D., "Statues of the State," *The Medallion* 48, no. 7-8 (July/August 2011): 9.

<sup>41</sup> Jennifer Carpenter, "Park Pick: The Angel on the Hill," *Texas Parks & Wildlife Magazine* (March 2017).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Section adapted from *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*, 24-25.

<sup>44</sup> "Raoul Josset Completes His 8-Foot Childress Memorial," *Dallas Morning News*, April 3, 1938.

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Board of Control hired Josset to design monuments and statues for the statewide Centennial. In three years, he completed 35 monuments and 5 statues, all commemorating subjects in Texas history.

Josset's commissions slowed after the Centennial, and he briefly pursued work outside of Texas. He returned to Dallas permanently in 1948 to share a studio with a friend, Jose Martin. There he created his final works that included: a 75-foot-long stone bas-relief for the Nelson-designed Grand Lodge Masonic Temple in Waco (1949), statue of *St. Francis of Assisi* in Lubbock (1953), and a statue of *Sam Houston* for the Masonic Temple in Waco (1957). Just as he was enjoying renewed professional success, Josset died suddenly in 1957. He told friends that he felt Texans appreciated his talents, saying "Texans seek [art] with meaning and...they choose with an eye of permanence, thinking in terms of years, generations, maybe forever."<sup>45</sup>

### Ugo Lavaggi (1885-1946)

Monument carver Ugo "Hugo" Lavaggi was born in Ortonovo, Italy in 1885 where the principle industry centered on the nearby Carrara marble quarries. Lavaggio learned his trade as a stone-carver's apprentice in Florence. He immigrated to New York in 1913, followed by his pregnant wife Micaela, and they were naturalized in 1925.<sup>46</sup> Lavaggi worked as a marble cutter and sculptor for the Piccirilli Brothers, a family of master stone carvers and sculptors.<sup>47</sup>

In the early 1930s, Lavaggi established a stone-carving business with his only son, Rene, and a brother. Many of their commissions were for architectural ornamentation on residential and commercial buildings in New York. Records indicate Lavaggi completed two notable commissions (outside of the Centennial) during his career: the Kansas City Liberty Memorial (1935); and 16-foot-tall granite-carved panels at the Philadelphia Post Office (1940).<sup>48</sup> The prestige of the commissions, which occurred at the same time as Lavaggi's Centennial work, suggest it was a productive period in his career. How Lavaggio came to work for the Centennial is unknown, but he is credited with carving two monuments for Raoul Josset: James Walker Fannin's Men (Goliad State Park, Goliad County) and La Salle. In 1946, Lavaggi died of heart failure while working on a project in Northampton, Rhode Island.<sup>49</sup>

### Donald S. Nelson (1907-1992)

Dallas architect Donald S. Nelson's contribution to La Salle and the Centennial public art project is overshadowed by his later accomplishments. Nelson was born in Chicago, Illinois on February 10, 1907. His formal training began at age 19 at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Fontainebleau, France. Upon his return stateside, he earned a bachelor of architecture degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). After winning the prestigious Paris Prize, Nelson returned to France in 1927 to attend the Ecole Normal Superieur des Beaux Arts. The young architect began his professional career in 1930 working as a junior member of the Chicago firm Bennett, Parsons, and Frost.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> "Texas Mourns Tragic Loss of Raoul Josset, Sculptor," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, July 21, 1957.

<sup>46</sup> "New York, Naturalization Records Ugo Lavaggi/Hugo Lavaggi," Ancestry.com, accessed December 2, 2017; Tad Wise, "The Man Who Carved Lincoln's Head," *Hudson Valley One*, February 27, 2017.

<sup>47</sup> According to Lavaggi's grandson, Ugo carved Lincoln's head for the Lincoln Memorial monument. Although records establish the Piccirilli Brothers did carve the monument, no existing documents testify to the grandson's statement. "Pioneer Woman Monument," Denton, Denton County, Texas, National Register of Historic Places, 2017, 13-14.

<sup>48</sup> "Liberty Memorial," Waymarking.com,

[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMK4YB\\_Liberty\\_Memorial\\_Kansas\\_City\\_Mo](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMK4YB_Liberty_Memorial_Kansas_City_Mo), accessed December 2, 2017; "Start Panal Work at Federal Bldg.," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 24, 1940.

<sup>49</sup> Tad Wise, "The Man Who Carved Lincoln's Head," *Hudson Valley One*, February 22, 2017.

<sup>50</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Nelson, Donald Siegfried," accessed September 01, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fnejz>.



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

Following World War II, Nelson entered the height of his professional career when he formed an architectural firm with Thomas D. Broad (Broad and Nelson) in Dallas. Nelson became a regionally-significant architect known for adding sculptural elements to his projects. No doubt his early career working with Centennial monuments introduced him to sculptors, like Raoul Josset, and influenced his architectural aesthetic. He designed many public and commercial buildings across the state, and is recognized for several noteworthy buildings in Dallas and Waco. These projects include: the Dallas Mercantile Bank Complex (1940-1947), a contributing building in the Downtown Dallas Historic District; the Texas Memorial Grand Lodge Temple in Waco (1950); the original passenger terminal at Love Field in Dallas (1957); and the Scottish Rite Library and Museum in Waco (1969).<sup>51</sup>

### Conclusion

The Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle monument in Indianola was one of the major projects of the state-directed effort to commemorate Texas history in the 1930s. Without the controversy between state and local centennial officials over the original proposed Fort St. Louis memorial, it is unlikely that a monument to La Salle would have been erected under the Centennial program. It is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Social History and Criterion C in the area of Art at the state level of significance under the multiple property submission *Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial*. As the largest sculptural figure commissioned for the Centennial and the last erected, La Salle is an excellent example of the statewide public art program. It is significant in the area of Art as an important work by master sculptors Raoul Josset. The property also meets Criterion Consideration F (Commemorative Properties) because it is significant as a work of art that reflects early 20th century interest in recognizing historic subjects throughout Texas, which culminated in the publicly-funded statewide Texas Centennial. The period of significance is 1939, the year the statue was erected.

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<sup>51</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Nelson, Donald Siegfried," accessed September 01, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fnejz>.

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**Maps**

Map 1: Calhoun County, Texas

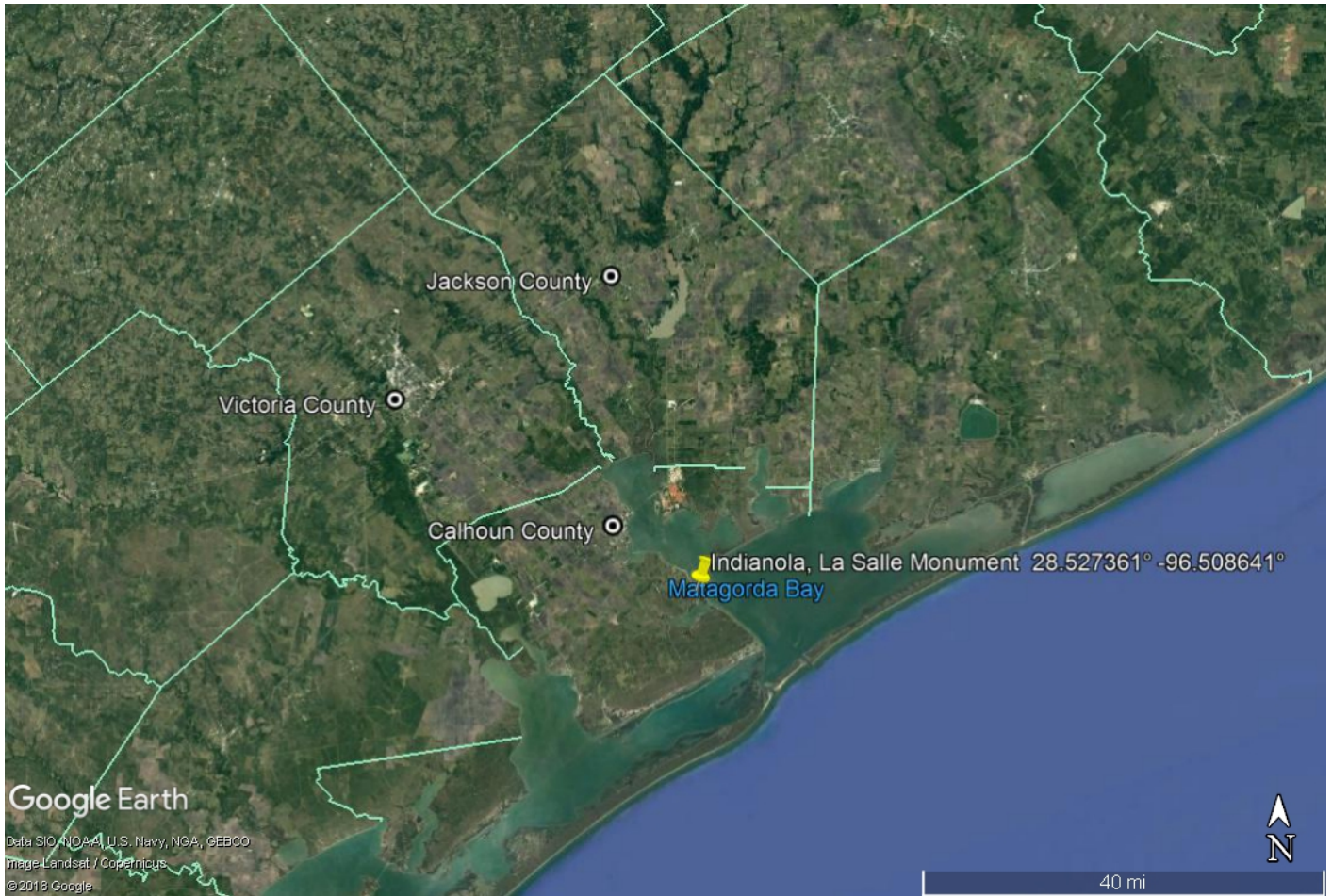


Map 2: La Salle Monument. Google Maps. Accessed August 15, 2017.  
Latitude: 28.527361°N Longitude: -96.508641°W



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Map 3: Map showing relationship between Calhoun, Victoria, and Jackson counties. Google Maps. Accessed June 11, 2018.

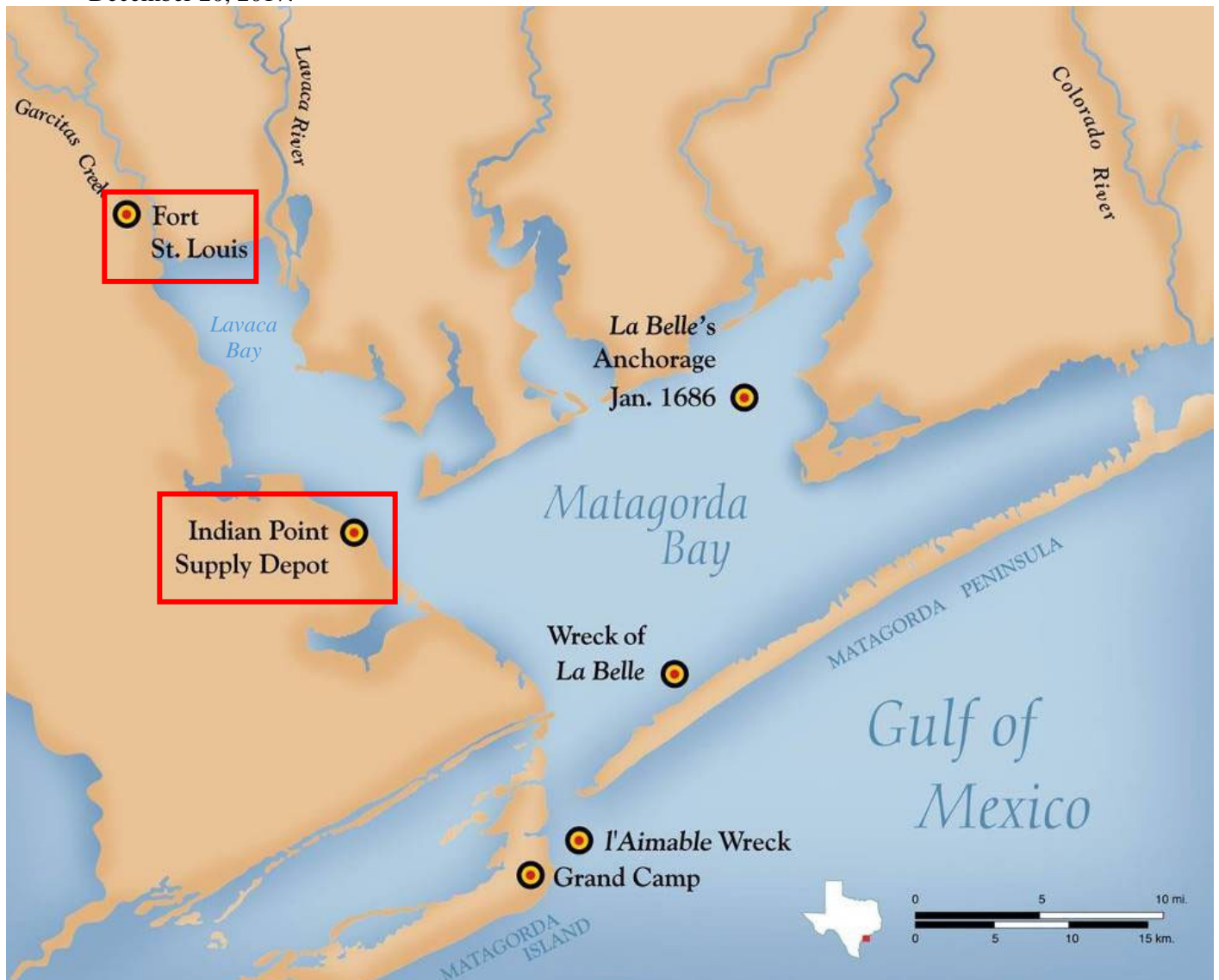


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**Figures**

Figure 1: Map of sites historically-associated with La Salle's Texas 1685 landing at Indianola ("Indian Point Supply Depot") and settlement (Fort St. Louis). The La Salle monument was erected at Indian Point.

Source: Texas Beyond History. <https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/stlouis/images/index-location-map.html>, accessed December 20, 2017.



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Figure 2: Nora Gammel Sweetwater's statue of La Salle, c.1928. According to the artist, she had difficulty sculpting a sword from concrete, "so Pat Jefferson let me have an old sword that had been in his family for years," and it was installed with the monument.

Source: Victoria Preservation, Inc./Victoria County Heritage Department



Figure 3: The remnants of Sweetwater's 1928 La Salle statue after a hurricane broke it in half. Someone decapitated and stole La Salle's head, which "was the best part of the work," Sweetwater once recalled.

Source: Gregory Smith, February 15, 2018.



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Figure 4: Rendering of Raoul Josset-designed bronze plaque for the original proposed granite slab monument commemorating Fort St. Louis and Presidio Nuestra Senora de Loreto de la Bahía, dated June 18, 1936. Source: Centennial Markers Collection, Records, Texas Historical Commission. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.





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Figure 5: Old Indianola Association members pose with the La Salle monument at its dedication on May 21, 1939.  
Source: Historic Photograph Collection, Victoria Regional History Center



Figure 6: Boy looking at La Salle monument, n.d.  
Source: Raoul Josset (1899-1957) Archival records and photographs, 1927-1967, Public Art Commissions, the Alexander Architectural Archives, the General Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin.



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Figure 7: Calhoun County Highway Map, c. 1940, showing improved road (TX 316/S. Beach Rd.) built to accommodate auto travel to the La Salle monument (red arrow) and Indianola in 1939.

Source: Texas Department of Transportation



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**Photographs**

La Salle Monument  
Indianola, Calhoun County, Texas  
Photographed by Gregory Smith  
February 14, 2018

Photo 1: La Salle Monument southeast (front) elevation—camera faces northwest.



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Photo 2: Detail of La Salle Monument—camera faces northwest. The upper portion of the La Salle monument is a full-rounded sculpture.



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Photo 3: La Salle Monument, northeast elevation—camera faces southwest.



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Photo 4: Rear (northwest) elevation of the La Salle Monument—camera faces southeast. The shaft is composed of four pieces, on which a combination of full-rounded and relief sculpture is carved.



La Salle Monument, Indianola, Calhoun County, Texas

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Photo 5: West oblique of the La Salle Monument—camera faces east. Josset depicted La Salle looking east towards Matagorda Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.



*~end~*













UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 6/18/2018      Date of Pending List: 7/9/2018      Date of 16th Day: 7/24/2018      Date of 45th Day: 8/2/2018      Date of Weekly List: 7/27/2018

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal           | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL            | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request     | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape       | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver           | <input type="checkbox"/> National        | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP             | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG             |   |

Accept       Return       Reject      7/27/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

Recommendation/  
Criteria

Reviewer Control Unit      Discipline \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

**TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
*real places telling real stories*



**TO:** Paul Lusignan  
 National Register of Historic Places  
 Mail Stop 7228  
 1849 C St, NW  
 Washington, D.C. 20240

**From:** Mark Wolfe, SHPO  
 Texas Historical Commission

**RE:** La Salle Monument, Indianola, Calhoun County, Texas

**DATE:** June 22, 2018

The following materials are submitted:

X	Original National Register of Historic Places form on disk. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the La Salle Monument, Indianola, Calhoun County, Texas (nominated under <i>Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial MPS</i> )
	Resubmitted nomination.
X	Original NRHP signature page signed by the Texas SHPO.
	Multiple Property Documentation form on disk.
	Resubmitted form.
	Original MPDF signature page signed by the Texas SHPO.
X	CD with TIFF photograph files, KMZ files, and nomination PDF
	Correspondence.

**COMMENTS:**

- SHPO requests substantive review (cover letter from SHPO attached)
- The enclosed owner objections (do\_\_\_) (do not\_\_\_) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other:

