

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM**

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

☒ New Submission      ☐ Amended Submission

**A. NAME OF MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING**

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas

**B. ASSOCIATED HISTORIC CONTEXTS**

The Sculpture of Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas

**C. FORM PREPARED BY**

**Name/Title:** Patsy Light, with Maria Pfeiffer (with assistance from Gregory W. Smith, Texas Historical Commission)

**Address:** 300 Argyle

**Telephone:** (210) 824-5914

**City/Town:** San Antonio, Texas

**State:** Texas

**Zip Code:** 78209

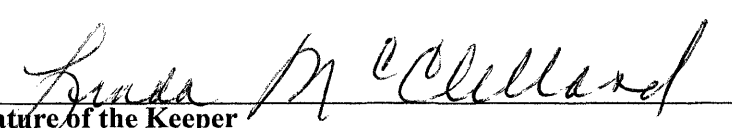
**D. CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature and title of certifying official (SHPO, Texas Historical Commission)

9-1-2004  
Date

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

  
Signature of the Keeper

10-22-2004  
Date

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM**

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas

Page 2

---

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**E. Statement of Historic Contexts** (see pages E-3 through E-18)

**F. Associated Property Types** (see pages F-19 through F-22)

**G. Geographical Data**

The area covered by this multiple property submission includes the State of Texas. Information regarding the Acreage of each property, UTM references, and boundary descriptions and justifications are included on each individual nomination form.

**H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods** (see page H-23)

**I. Major Bibliographical References** (see pages I-24 through I-27)

**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 SHPO, Arkansas SHPO)
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 3

---

THE SCULPTURE OF DIONICIO RODRIGUEZ IN TEXAS

Mexican artisan, Dionicio Rodriguez, was a skilled practitioner of the technique variously described as rustic, *faux bois* (imitation wood) or *trabajo rustico* (rustic work). His great-nephew by marriage, Carlos Cortés, who continues to practice this art form today, describes Rodriguez's naturalistic style as "organic" (Cortés to Light). John Beardsley, an authority on landscape architecture, believes that Rodriguez was trained in this tradition in Mexico before coming to the United States ca. 1924 (Beardsley 1995: 130).

Over a period of nearly thirty years, from 1924 through the early 1950s, Dionicio Rodriguez traveled throughout the United States creating concrete sculptural works which imitated the natural forms and textures of rocks and wood. His designs include gates, bridges, steps, grottos, fountains, hollow tree shelters, thatched-roof benches, tables, and buildings. Many of these works were included in planned landscape environments. Examples of theme-oriented environments include a cave and pool at Memorial Park in Memphis, Stations of the Cross at St. Joseph's Church and Shrine in Cambridge, Michigan, and the "old mill" at T. R. Pugh Memorial Park in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

The extent of Rodriguez's travels is attested to by known remaining examples of his artistry in Texas, Arkansas, Maryland, Michigan, Illinois, Tennessee, Alabama and New Mexico. (See p. 18: "Chronology of Life and Work of Dionicio Rodriguez") A portion of this work is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

- Sculpture at the Stuckey House, Longview, Texas (Nugget Hill Historic District, NR 1998)
- Memorial Park Cemetery, Memphis, Tennessee (NR 1990)
- Lakewood Park, Couchwood and Little Switzerland in Garland, Pulaski and Hot Spring Counties, Arkansas (NR 1986); T.R. Pugh Memorial Park and Crestview Park, North Little Rock, Arkansas (NR 1986).
- In addition, Rodriguez's sculpture at St. Joseph's Church and Shrine in the Township of Cambridge, Michigan is listed by the Bureau of History, Michigan Department of State (1990).

Faux Bois Sculpture

Dionicio Rodriguez's use of the rustic theme in garden design has documented antecedents in Europe, Asia, Mexico and the United States that span several centuries. John Beardsley writes that *faux bois* pieces were "incorporated into the landscape of public parks in nineteenth-century Europe." A small building behind the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris has a "wood" textured façade and roof, with a plaque reading "*Ciment Arme. Travaux Rustiques*" (reinforced cement; rustic work) *J. Dunaigre*. Concrete "wooden" bridges can be seen in several parks in the environs of Paris, and there are two stairways at the Musee Hotel Baudy in Giverny, France.

Many *faux bois* designs are associated with whimsical themes and are known as follies, as exemplified by Marie Antoinette's folly, the Petit Trianon at Versailles. A less well-known example was the fanciful pagoda at Bonnelles, France, commissioned by the Duke d'Uzes, ca. 1780 (demolished) (Dams and Zega 1995:161). A tiny, Chinese-style structure on an artificial rockwork island in a lake was reached by a series of rustic arching wooden bridges. In Turkey, Sultan Abdulhamid's gardens at Yildiz Park, outside of Istanbul, has a bridge built in 1877. Examples of rustic concrete work also can be found in Mexico and Japan.

In the United States, A.J. Downing designed naturalistic landscapes in the 1840s, and landscape engineer George Woodward's drawings of rustic wooden seats were published in 1869 in *Woodward's Architecture and Rural Art*. Architect Calvert Vaux, who, with Frederick Law Olmstead, was responsible for much of the early design of Central Park, published drawings of a rustic wooden bridge and a shelter for the park in 1854 (Vaux, 1864: 292, 288). Several of these structures have been reconstructed using the original drawings (Rogers to Light).

It is important to note that at the time Dionicio Rodriguez was working in Texas and throughout the United States, there were other artisans practicing in the "*trabajo rustico*" genre. Several of these individuals worked with Rodriguez at

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 4

different times. These craftsmen included Basilio (last name unavailable), Sam Murray, Maximo Cortés, Modesto Dena, Aguilar (who signed his work, "Aguilar, maker"), Dionicio Rosales, Tony Lopez, Mauro Del Toro, Ralph Corona and George Cardoso. Although there are fine, extant works by these men (and others whose identities are unknown), it is generally agreed that Rodriguez was the most skilled practitioner of the genre. Examples of other artisans' work in San Antonio are: the Friedrich family burial plot in the City Cemetery #1 by Sam Murray; "wooden" gas pumps by Basilio (3011 North St. Mary's Street); animal enclosures at the San Antonio Zoo by Tony Lopez; and a house façade by Mauro Del Toro (416 Fey Street). Genaro Briones also worked with Rodriguez in Memphis in the 1930s, and later used tinted concrete on his own house in Austin (Briones House, NR 1998). Rodriguez frequently visited the house while it was under construction, beginning in 1947. Briones was no imitator, developing a style of his own: while Rodriguez utilized color to achieve a natural effect, Briones applied bright colors to low relief as a bold decorative device. Briones' *faux bois* furniture in the front yard, however, is reminiscent of Rodriguez's lighter pieces of park furniture.

**Dionicio Rodriguez (1891-1955)**

Much of what is known about the life of Dionicio Rodriguez is based on interviews with his niece, Manuela Vargas Theall, who traveled with him to commissions outside of Texas from May 1937 to March 1938; fellow artisan, Sam Murray; Mrs. Guadalupe Del Toro, the wife of Mauro Del Toro who worked with Rodriguez; and Carlos Cortés, Rodriguez's great nephew by marriage.

Dionicio Rodriguez was born in Toluca, on the outskirts of Mexico City, on April 11, 1891. His family moved to Mexico City, where, as a young man, he assisted his father in building brick houses. Later, he was employed by Luis Robles Gil, a civil engineer and contractor who specialized in works of reinforced concrete. He also worked for J.W. Douglas, making concrete objects. Discussing Rodriguez's work on the artificial rocks in Lagos de Chapultepec, a Mexico City park, Mrs. Theall said, "they made everything that looked like rock" (Theall to Light). Although not documented as his work, there are approximately 100 *palapa* (a structure with a roof made of bundled straw) benches in Parque de Mexico in the La Condesa district of Mexico City that could be by Rodriguez as they are similar to benches that he created in the United States.

In 1924, armed with letters of recommendation from Gil and Douglas, Rodriguez left Mexico City, and lived for a short time in Monterrey (see Appendix, items 2 and 3). There he joined Maximo Cortés' father who worked near a cemetery where he made *piedra prensada* (ornamental work). The elder Cortés suggested that Rodriguez go to Laredo, Texas, where he found work with Maximo Cortés who was casting cement embellishments for a school (Cortés to Light). After a short period, Rodriguez left Laredo and moved to San Antonio, arriving in about 1924 during the city's pre-Depression building boom. The 1924-1925 San Antonio City Directory lists "D. Rodriguez," an employee of Alamo Cement Company, living at 1919 W. Commerce. Soon after moving to San Antonio, Rodriguez contacted Maximo Cortés to inform him that there were employment opportunities. "I'm going to return the favor, and you can work with me" (Cortés to Light). Cortés came to San Antonio, and the two later collaborated on numerous projects.

According to photographs, Dionicio Rodriguez was small in stature with a dark complexion. He suffered throughout his adult life with diabetes, which eventually caused him to lose his sight. His diabetic condition was not diagnosed until two of his clients, Clovis Hinds and Justin Matthews, arranged for him to seek medical help in Arkansas in 1935. His personality has been described as "*muy aparte y muy seria*" (very distant and serious) (Del Toro to Pfeiffer and Light). Manuela Theall said, "He didn't have many friends because he was always going – he didn't stay in one place too many days" (Theall to Light). According to Theall, he was a very neat dresser, usually wearing a coat and tie. She said, "He took off his coat, put on a pair of long pants, rolled up his sleeves and went to work" to apply the details and color to the forms that had been constructed by laborers under his supervision.

Dionicio Rodriguez's work in Texas is on a human scale and the tints he used mimic the colors of the natural surfaces that he emulated. The majority of his works are realistically modeled in cement that imitates wood surfaces of cross-cut and hewn logs, tree trunks, logs and branches with deeply textured and peeling bark, knot holes, insect borings and patches of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEETSection E Page 5Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

lichen. Rodriguez did not discuss his work nor did he make preliminary drawings. With assistance from his helpers, he formed the armatures of the sculptural works from steel reinforcing bars, bound them together with wire, wrapped them with mesh wire, filled the wire with cement and rubble, and applied a coat of rough cement. (In one instance, at Pugh's Old Mill project in Arkansas, he used copper rebar in order to insure longevity of the work.) He then applied a final coat of "neat" (pure) Portland cement with no mortar directly from the bag. According to Stanley Schmidt, "He just sat down on the ground with a sack of cement, and started working" (Schmidt 1980:1). Rodriguez used homemade tools and ordinary tableware to create textures, although he later acquired some professional tools. His ability to reproduce the textures of rocks, thatch and wooden surfaces is so realistic, that in many cases, it is impossible to distinguish the difference between cement imitation and actual surface.

Rodriguez was very secretive about his process, especially the final step that included the application of color applied when the cement was slightly damp. According to John Kagay, the chemist at the Alamo Portland Cement Company who supplied him with these colorants when he was in San Antonio, he used a mixture of water and chemicals to create various tints—sulfuric acid, muriatic acid, iron oxide, saltpeter and some lampblack to darken the colors (Schmidt to Light and Pfeiffer). His niece, Manuela Theall, recalled that he heated these chemicals with water on a stove.

John Richmond, who worked with Rodriguez in Memphis, recalled that the artisan always wore rubber gloves when he was applying the chemicals (Richmond to Smythe and Anthony). Rodriguez kept the colorants in the trunk of his car, and if anyone came too close, he would immediately shut the trunk lid. He sometimes would mix them in a tent adjacent to his work site. One source recalls that he would break the bottles of the chemicals when they were empty, in order to keep anyone from learning their identity (Richmond to Smythe and Anthony). Another artisan, Sam Murray, said he learned the coloring technique by working as Rodriguez's assistant. According to Murray, he had a good background in mixing colors from his former work in cast stone, and he said it did not take him long to "pick it up" (Murray to Light and Pfeiffer).

As evidenced in his Texas work, Dionicio Rodriguez was a talented artist with particular expertise in the use of cement, homemade tools and special chemicals to create natural looking surfaces and textures. Though his work was largely unrecognized for many years, individuals, conservation groups, and public entities have begun to recognize its importance. Fortunately, the majority of his Texas work appears to remain intact. In 1992, the City of San Antonio's Parks and Recreation Department commissioned restoration of a bridge, one of his most unique pieces. During the 5 years of research leading to this nomination, three previously unknown projects by Rodriguez were discovered. It is therefore possible, if not likely, that other works remain to be identified in Texas and throughout the United States.

In spite of the fact that Dionicio Rodriguez began his United States career in Texas, only one of his Texas projects (garden sculpture at the Stuckey house in the Nuggett Hill Historic District in Longview, Texas, in 1998) is listed on the National Register. Additional National Register works located outside the state include:

- Memorial Park Cemetery- Memphis, Tennessee (1990)
- Lakewood Park, Couchwood and Little Switzerland- Garland, Pulaski and Hot Spring Counties, Arkansas (1986)
- T.R. Pugh Memorial Park and Crestview Park- North Little Rock, Arkansas (1996)

Although his naturalistic sculptures have been found in eight states, Dionicio Rodriguez was not recognized as a *faux bois* artisan on a national level until his work was placed on the National Register in nominations authored by Julie Vosmik in 1986 and 1991 and Norman Black in 1998 (see preceding paragraph). His rustic style of work, using concrete and metal reinforcing rods to reproduce very realistic sculptures that imitated wood or rock, was a technique that he learned in Mexico from one of his early employers, Robles Gil. It is possible that that Gil was familiar with *faux bois* antecedents in Europe (oral tradition reveals that Gil had come to Mexico from Europe), but it is unlikely that Rodriguez had seen drawings or reproductions of European works. Rodriguez has been recognized as the most skilled and most "naturalistic" of the artisans who were working in this style in the United States in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Cortés to Light). Many of his peers learned the sculpting technique from him, although few were able to duplicate his method of color application or attain his level of expertise.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 6

---

In spite of his extensive travels and many commissions, Rodriguez never learned to speak or write English. Letters from Rodriguez to his client, Clovis Hinds, were apparently written for him by friends and/or family members (Clovis Hinds' Collection). Rodriguez worked intermittently for Hinds at Memorial Cemetery in Memphis from the early 1930s through the early 1940s, and his correspondence indicates that he was a conscientious worker. He wrote, "I always try to do the best of my ability" (Rodriguez to Hinds, ca. 1939).

Rodriguez purchased a new car each year for his travels to work on commissions across the United States. Manuela Theall said he didn't know anything about cars, and he wouldn't let anyone else drive, although occasionally she was permitted to drive on country roads. Traveling companions included friends and/or family members, and the group would rent rooms in boarding houses, hotels or YMCAs. He hired local laborers as assistants at the various job sites. Between projects, when weather conditions were not right for working in concrete, during cold weather, or when he was not feeling well, Rodriguez would return to Mexico or San Antonio. He was married and divorced twice, and had no children.

Dionicio Rodriguez's peripatetic nature makes it difficult to precisely catalogue his work by place and year. His first jobs after he arrived from Mexico were in San Antonio and the largest concentration of his work in Texas can be found there. The second phase of his work was primarily in other parts of Texas, and finally, he began securing commissions throughout the United States. His career in the United States spanned a period of over twenty years, from 1924 to the early 1950s, and much of his work remains intact at 12 sites in Texas (2003). As a collection of *faux bois* sculpture designed and constructed by a skilled practitioner of this technique, the body of Dionicio Rodriguez's work in Texas is eligible for National Register listing under Criterion C (local level) in the area of art.

### Dionicio Rodriguez's Extant Projects

This National Register nomination deals with Rodriguez's work in Texas, but includes a discussion of other works in order to understand the scope of his endeavors. This section of the nomination has three parts: Part I: San Antonio Work; Part II: Other Towns in Texas; and Part III: Additional Work in the United States. As some of his jobs were underway simultaneously, the chronological order overlaps.

#### Part I: San Antonio Work

In order to clarify the descriptions of Rodriguez's San Antonio work, the following sections are classified by projects. Some of these projects were completed during years when he was working in other states.

##### Dr. Urrutia and Miraflores

It is assumed that Rodriguez's first work after he arrived in San Antonio was for Dr. Aureliano Urrutia. Urrutia was a Mexican surgeon who was exiled from his country during the 1910 revolution and settled in the United States in 1915. Urrutia had established a clinic in Mexico where he performed surgeries and taught medical students. In San Antonio, Dr. Urrutia became a respected member of the medical community. He performed many difficult surgeries, including the separation of Siamese twins. In recognition of this and other operations, he was elected to the American College of Surgeons.

Aureliano Urrutia built an elaborate residence, Quinta Urrutia (demolished, 1962), in the 3300 block of Broadway north of downtown San Antonio. It has been described as "...a self-designed blend of Moorish and Spanish architecture" (*San Antonio Express-News*, September 14, 1997: 9G). Architectural historian, Mary Carolyn George, deemed Quinta Urrutia "... the city's most famous example of exuberant eclecticism." (George, 1992: 156). Approximately one-half mile north of his home, Urrutia purchased 15 acres of land that he named Miraflores. This park-like estate was bounded by Broadway on the east, Hildebrand on the north, the San Antonio River and Brackenridge Park on the west, and publicly

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 7

---

owned property on the south. Urrutia probably wanted a park-like atmosphere for his garden similar to Xochimilco, the site of the floating gardens near Mexico City, where he was born.

Oral tradition states that Dr. Urrutia shipped two rail cars of objects from Mexico to furnish Quinta Urrutia and Miraflores. Miraflores contains concrete benches and walls decorated with glazed tiles and whole glazed ceramic plates, and two statues representing Indian warriors. A life-sized bronze sculpture of Dr. Urrutia is sited in the reflecting pool (now empty) in the western end of the garden. Nearby is a concrete replica of the Nike of Samothrace which originally stood on the roof of Quinta Urrutia, centered above the front entrance.

In 1923, Dr. Urrutia built a guesthouse that he named Quinta Maria on the western edge of Miraflores near the San Antonio River. The 1-story, side-gabled structure was built of hollow tile with a red tile roof. The house was restored by Southwestern Bell Telephone Company in 1981.

Miraflores was landscaped with native and exotic plants and trees and works by Rodriguez and other sculptors. The garden served as both a private retreat as well as a place where the doctor entertained his expansive family and circle of friends. When national convention of the Association of Architects was held in San Antonio in 1931, Dr. Urrutia entertained the group with a party in Miraflores.

Miraflores was sold to United Services Automobile Association in 1962, and the company built an 8-story office building and a parking lot on the eastern portion of the garden. Southwestern Bell Telephone Company purchased all of the property in 1974, and in 2001, sold the Miraflores portion of the land to The University of Incarnate Word. Nine works by Rodriguez remain in Miraflores:

- "tree trunk" entry gate
- "hollow tree trunk" to house electrical equipment
- "fallen tree trunk bench"
- "thatched" roofed bench (relocated from the grounds near Quinta Urrutia)
- two sets of steps (which make the transition from one level to the next)
- two round pools (now planters)
- small grotto

A large fountain built of "stone" ledges (demolished 2001) was supplied by an artesian well. The well supplied water for both the fountain and concrete channels that filled a large oval pool (no longer extant). Dr. Urrutia swam here year around everyday at 5:00 a.m. (Theall to Light). A tile and bronze gate with ornamentation attributed to Rodriguez was relocated west of its original site on Broadway when U.S.A.A. constructed its headquarters in 1962. It was removed from the garden entirely in April/May 1998 and relocated to the San Antonio Museum of Art as part of its Latin American art collection. The gate, (not eligible for inclusion in this nomination), has supporting columns faced on the sides and the rear with rustic cut terra cotta colored "stones" which are attributed to Rodriguez. A small "log" bench made by Rodriguez was also removed from Miraflores and given to the Witte Museum in 1974.

The relationship between Dr. Urrutia and Rodriguez continued for many years. During the last part of his life, Rodriguez was hospitalized with pneumonia. Manuela Theall recalled that her uncle, eager to finish a job, did not dress warmly enough in cold weather or otherwise take care of himself. Dr. Urrutia treated Rodriguez, advising him "to eat steak" and "drink a shot of whiskey" so he could "get strong" (Theall to Light).

**Charles Baumberger and Alamo Portland Cement**

It was apparently Dr. Urrutia who introduced Rodriguez to Charles Baumberger, founder of Alamo Portland Cement Company. Like Urrutia, Baumberger commissioned Rodriguez to complete multiple works for him including pieces for the City of Alamo Heights, his company headquarters, and his personal residence (Schmidt to Light).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 8

Alamo Portland and Roman Cement Company (later renamed Alamo Cement Company), began excavations at the City of San Antonio's quarry north of downtown in 1880. As the quarry operations grew and railroad connections were required, the company moved farther north in 1908, remaining at that location for 77 years. The old quarry was incorporated into Brackenridge Park, and in 1917, City Parks Commissioner, Ray Lambert, used prison laborers to transform the area into the Japanese Tea Garden (Texas Historic Civil Engineering Landmark, 1979; Texas Historical Commission marker, 1991).

Baumberger commissioned Rodriguez to build several projects for the company's office complex at its second location. Surrounding the north, east and west boundaries of the company office, Rodriguez built a 125' long "wooden" fence, centered with an elaborate arched entryway formed by two large interlocking "tree trunks" and a curved "branch". Fence rail "logs" imitate twenty species of tree bark, including Eucalyptus, a species prevalent in his native Mexico. Because he did not always sign his work, the "Made by D. Rodriguez" signature etched into a smooth area of the west side of the archway, is an important feature.

Between the office and company laboratory, Rodriguez constructed a round fountain (not operating in 2002), covered by a "thatched" roof and encircled by a "log" fence. The fountain's texture simulates Edwards limestone formations that are found throughout Central Texas. Cement "cactus plants" embellish crevices on the lower edge of the fountain. Stanley Schmidt writes that the cactus "...may seem incongruous, but may have been something that he saw in his country." Twisting snakes encircle two of the vertical "tree branch" roof supports. No longer extant is the small concrete alligator which early observers remembered as resting near the pool. Schmidt recalls that when the fountain was in operation "live goldfish were kept in the pond...lavished with live green fern" (Schmidt, 1980).

A large "hollow tree" sculpture (similar to others by Rodriguez) was moved from Baumberger's home to the grounds of the Cement Company. According to Stanley Schmidt, it was equipped with electric lighting. This work was removed when the company sold the property, and its present location is unknown.

When Alamo Cement Company moved in 1985, the 468-acre site was sold to investors for a mixed-use development including The Quarry Market. Some of the original industrial structures were demolished, while others, including three smokestacks were integrated into the project. The company office and laboratory north of the shopping area were purchased separately in 1993, and several of Rodriguez's works were preserved in place. The office was remodeled as a café and the former laboratory as a brewery and restaurant.

Charles Baumberger's garden at his home at 325 West Lynwood (Monte Vista NR Historic District, 1998) was filled with Rodriguez's work including the aforementioned tree house, concrete benches and planters. When the house was sold in the 1990s, the some of the smaller concrete pieces were purchased by an antique dealer and have since been sold to private collectors. These works, though not included in this nomination, illustrate some of Rodriguez most organically inspired creations executed during this period.

Charles Baumberger also commissioned Rodriguez to construct a streetcar stop as a gift to the City of Alamo Heights, an incorporated municipality north of San Antonio's city limits. Three large "tree trunks" with "branches" serving as brackets support a gabled "thatched roof." The shelter, located at Broadway and Patterson Avenues, is still used as a bus stop. A bronze plaque attached to inside of the roof reads "Presented to the City of Alamo Heights San Antonio by the Portland Cement Company Charles Baumberger, Pres."



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 9

Works in San Antonio Parks

Dionicio Rodriguez completed numerous works for the City of San Antonio that were installed in Brackenridge, Pittman-Sullivan, and Buckeye Parks, Alamo Plaza (NR Historic District, 1977) and the garden of the Spanish Governor's Palace (NR 1970).

Two of his best-known pieces – a footbridge over the old waterworks channel and the entrance to the Japanese Tea Garden – are located in Brackenridge Park. The “wooden” footbridge was built ca. 1926. The curved structure parallels a bend in the road and resembles an elongated arbor. The realism of the structure's detailing was described by *Popular Mechanics* magazine in 1927. “...where stripped bark exposed the channel made by some wood borer, a spot where some industrious woodpecker sought a grub. Park attendants say this bridge even fools the woodpeckers.” Although Rodriguez would later build many bridges, this design remains unique and was not replicated at any other known site. “D. Rodriguez” is incised in one of the horizontal “branches” near the northern end of the bridge. Sam Murray and Maximo Cortés are said to have been assistants on the project (Cortés to Light; Murray to Light and Pfeiffer).

The oriental-style entrance gate to the Japanese Tea Garden is one of Rodriguez's most exuberant works. At the time of the gate's completion in 1942, the garden was known as the Chinese Tea Garden, a response to anti-Japanese discrimination during World War II. (The name was changed back to Japanese Tea Garden in 1983). Carlos Cortés relates that his father, Maximo Cortés, designed the entrance gate, which was then built by Dionicio Rodriguez, whose signature is etched into the left handrail. It is known that both Cortés and Rodriguez collaborated on its construction. Four sturdy vertical “tree trunk” posts with “branches” as brackets support lentils and a “thatched” roof, with four upturned corners, reminiscent of a Torii gate. At critical points, Rodriguez applied his signature pyramid-headed “bolts.” Chinese calligraphy sculpted in relief adorns the right-hand post and the reverse side of the largest lintel. A translation of the writing is “China Garden” (Field to Light). Rodriguez had sculpted a smaller version of the gate, along with numerous other pieces in Clayton, New Mexico in 1933 (see “Work in the United States”).

There are other works by Rodriguez in Brackenridge Park. A *palapa* or “thatched” roof shelter resembling a large mushroom is located near the San Antonio River. A huge tree trunk supports the hipped roof, made of three concentric layers of “thatched” bundles. The piece is not signed, but two similar constructions attributed to Rodriguez exist in Chicago's Cedar Park and Temple Sholem cemeteries (Sclair, pp.14-15). Another is found at Lakewood Park in North Little Rock.

A “thatched” roof bench, an oft-repeated design of Rodriguez, is located in the park at the terminus of St. Mary's Street across from the entrance to the San Antonio Zoo. The roof ends curve upward, similar to the oriental roof design of the Japanese Sunken Garden entrance. On the lower edge of the inside of the roof is a small applied concrete plaque that reads “D. Rodriguez.”

Photographs of Alamo Plaza ca. 1959 reveal a large “hollow tree” structure and a small bench (similar to those in Brackenridge Park and Miraflores), both attributed to Rodriguez. Other tree structures exist in Memphis, Tennessee; Clayton, New Mexico; Suitland, Maryland; and North Little Rock, Arkansas. The “tree house” was relocated from Alamo Plaza and is now in Brackenridge Park awaiting a final site when park reconstruction is completed.

A whimsical structure of two curving “tree trunks” provides an unusual entrance to Buckeye Park on Hermosa Drive, northwest of downtown adjacent to Interstate 10. At the apex, one of the large curved “trunks” is notched and the corresponding trunk passes through the notch. Although it has no signature, the structure bears trademarks of Rodriguez's work— heavily textured bark with knots and insect holes. The “log” on the right front of the gate bears a portion of an inscription that reads “Hugo Traupmann, Director of Parks,” and the numerals “83327-10.”

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 10

A dead "tree" sculpture attributed to Rodriguez once stood in Pittman-Sullivan Park on the eastern edge of downtown. Though demolished many years ago, it deserves mention because of its design relationship to "tree house" sculptures built by Rodriguez throughout the United States.

*The Spanish Governor's Palace*

At the urging of Adina de Zavala's Landmarks Association and other local women's organizations, citizens approved a bond issue in 1928 that allowed the City of San Antonio to purchase the Spanish Governor's Palace, the city's sole surviving Spanish period secular building. Restoration architect, Harvey Smith, restored the dilapidated building while Dallas landscape architect, Homer Fry, designed the interior patio (Fisher, 1996; 127). Dionicio Rodriguez completed four "wood slab" benches and two "wooden" light poles that encircled the patio's fountain. The design of the benches is dissimilar to other known works by Rodriguez, but his technique of creating the texture of insect holes, knotholes and rough and peeling bark is present. The Governor's Palace inventory states "Benches, wood-like in patio. Metal Frame with concrete. A man named Rodriguez about 1930." (Parks and Recreation Department records).

*Additional Works in San Antonio*

Manuela Theall recalls that either before or after she traveled with Rodriguez in the 1930s, he built the Stations of the Cross and the grotto at St. Anthony of Padua Shrine (Theall to Light). The church, founded by Father Peter Baque in 1925, was located near the Alamo Cement Company's employee housing, "Cementville," and served as the parish church for the inhabitants of the settlement. Maria Ciarrochi writes that Father Baque supervised the building of the shrine, the stations and the grotto (Ciarrochi 1996; 3). Each station, built of Edwards honeycomb limestone rock, is capped by two pinnacles, and at eye level is a relief carved marble plaque with a scene from the "Way of the Cross." Inscribed below the plaque is the name of the donor of the station. Rodriguez's patron, Charles Baumberger, donated one of the stations. The grotto, constructed of the same rock as the stations, has an interior lined with seashells similar to an earlier work in Port Arthur. (See "Eddingston Court") The numerals "1939" are etched into the sidewalk leading to the entrance of the grotto. The construction style and incorporation of Edwards limestone are similar to the grotto at Moye Retreat Center in Castroville, Texas, that was built and signed by Rodriguez in 1945 (see "Works Around Texas").

Oral tradition reveals that the "wooden *canales*" (roof drains) made of "wood" textured concrete on the walls of the reconstructed mill and granary at Mission San Jose y San Miguel de Aguayo in San Antonio were created by Rodriguez. Though no documents have been found to substantiate this claim, circumstantial evidence indicates that it might be true. The mill and granary were reconstructed c. 1933, during the same period that the Spanish Governor's Palace was being completed. Charles Baumberger apparently contributed cement to reconstruct the San Jose granary and mill, and Harvey Smith supervised reconstruction of the mission. Rodriguez was well-known to both men, and it is likely that his skills might have been employed at San Jose Mission (Vertical files, San Antonio Conservation Society).

Carlos Cortés, based on accounts by his father, Maximo Cortés, credits Rodriguez with the "*trabajo rustico*" facade of the building at 2702 North St. Mary's. No written documentation has been located to date. Lucille Quinones Harwood, whose popular Mexican restaurant, *Jacala* once occupied the building, says that the facade of "board" facing and "log" trimmed windows and doors was applied when they remodeled the building in the early 1950s. No other building facade by Rodriguez in Texas has been documented at the time of this writing.

**II. Other Towns in Texas**

Around 1926, soon after his arrival in San Antonio, Dionicio began to get commissions in East Texas, particularly in Port Arthur, Beaumont, Houston, Sweeny and Longview. It is not known how he made contact with these early clients outside of San Antonio.

*Comfort-- The Steves' Ranch*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEETSculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property SubmissionSection E Page 11

Albert Steves was the son of German immigrants who settled in Comfort before moving to San Antonio where they established a lumber business and became one of the city's leading families. In addition to working in the family business, Steves served as "...president of two railroads in Mexico, president of a Mexican mining company, vice-president of the City National Bank, and as a director of the Alamo National Bank." He was also a member of many civic, fraternal, social and political groups (Steinfeldt, 1978: 12, 13).

Steves wanted summer home near his birthplace, and he bought land on the Guadalupe River near Comfort. There he built a large house that he named, "Aleswana," a combination of the names of his four children. Steves commissioned Dionicio Rodriguez to build a palapa-roofed tree branch gazebo and four benches for the large grounds. A family member, Margaret Lateer, remembers that the gazebo was built before 1931 and that at one time it was used as an aviary and that Mr. Steves stored his wine behind a small "rock" door underneath the sculpture (Lateer to Light). Although there is no signature, the technique is unmistakably Rodriguez's with his application of "worm holes," "peeling bark texture," "lichen," and imitation "bark" of pecan, cypress, pecan, peach, hackberry and oak trees. The round structure is 18-feet tall and is sited on a hillside high above the Guadalupe River. The property is now the Haven River Inn, and the present owners relate that it is a popular site for weddings. The gazebo is strikingly similar to the Marmion gazebo and to one at the Phelan mansion.

Sweeney—The James Richard Marmion Property

In 1910, San Antonio native, James Richard Marmion, bought approximately 360 acres of property adjacent to the San Bernard River, three miles east of Sweeny, as a retreat for his family. Marmion was involved in real estate, buying railroad right-of-ways for the New York and Texas Land Company Limited. Although he had moved to Houston, he traveled to towns in East Texas and to Sinaloa, Mexico, where he owned a silver and gold mine. It is possible that he had seen Rodriguez's work in San Antonio or had learned about it from one of the artisan's clients. One client was San Antonio businessman, Albert Steves, who had Rodriguez build a gazebo for his country place in Comfort. In 1926, Marmion commissioned Rodriguez to build two structures, both with *palapa* type roofs: a "wooden" gazebo and a "wooden" table with two benches. The round gazebo, almost identical to Albert Steves's gazebo in Comfort, rests on "boulders," and "bark-covered logs" with recognizable textures of various trees support the octagonal roof. The gazebo was built on the largest island in a series of three islands in a man-made lake and was reached by small rustic board bridge. Approximately a quarter of a mile away is the other structure, a table, intersected by a "bark covered tree trunk" which supports the round "thatched" roof and two "log" benches. Marmion's daughter-in-law recalls that James Marmion was intrigued by Rodriguez's secrecy in not allowing his helper to watch while he applied the colors (Marmion to Light).

Port Arthur-- Eddingston Court

In 1929, Dionicio Rodriguez, his wife, Sara, Guadalupe Del Toro and her husband, Mauro, George Cardosa (Sara's brother) and Ralph Corona went to Port Arthur, Texas, to work on landscape embellishment features for the Eddingston Court apartments. According to Mrs. Del Toro (who was an eighteen-year old bride), they rented rooms for lodging. Although she relates that she occasionally helped with the concrete work, she and Sara spent much of the time at the rented rooms where Sara taught her to embroider and sew. She related that Rodriguez was a very jealous husband, and did not want Sara to leave the house.

The group worked for tugboat captain, Captain Ambrose Eddingston, who commissioned Captain Leonard Tibbetts to bring 5,000 conch shells collected by divers off of the coast of Eddington's birthplace, Grand Cayman Island, to Port Arthur, Texas to decorate the project. Captain Eddingston planned the apartments in 1927, when new people were moving into Port Arthur and suitable housing was scarce. Will Farrington of Houston was the builder and Rodriguez was hired to build the landscape features. Rodriguez and his helpers built a wall and entrance gate of the shells and the "cave

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 12

of a thousand sounds,” a grotto-like enclosure lined with conch shells. The captain described his project as the “garden spot of Texas” (Port Arthur News, 1990: 4-c).

Other features included several fountains, (resembling the fountain which Dr. Urrutia commissioned for Miraflores), a large pool, furniture, a large basket planter, a cactus plants and other objects. Though in poor condition, many of these features were extant in 2002.

Beaumont—The Phelan Mansion

Guadalupe Del Toro remembers that she and her husband and a group of helpers also accompanied Rodriguez to Beaumont, Texas, to construct garden embellishments for the John Henry Phelan mansion ca. 1930. The group traveled in a new De Soto automobile (Del Toro to Light and Pfeiffer).

Phelan, and his wife were owners of the Phelan Coffee Company, a wholesale grocery firm. They were also investors with the Yount-Lee Oil Company which developed the second Spindeltop oilfield, and later, the Sour Lake discovery (Hunt to Light). According to historian, Bradley Brooks, Owen Southworth, the architect of the house, was the “creative mind of the landscape,” and Homer Fry of Dallas was hired as the landscape architect (Brooks to Light). Fry had designed the patio of the Spanish Governor’s Palace in San Antonio and it is possible that he recommended Rodriguez’s work to Mr. Phelan.

When the Sisters of Charity inherited the Phelan property in the 1950s, they built St. Elizabeth’s Hospital on the grounds and most of the imaginative environment built by Rodriguez and his assistants was demolished. The landscape once included an artificial lake with a spillway, a gazebo (which appears to have been similar to the Marmion and Steves gazebos), bridges and a pool house with a concrete *palapa* (thatched) roof were no longer extant. Still remaining are four *palapa* seats which might have served as rest stops for the three-hole putting green that was part of the landscaping plan, a “pine” table, and a large “log” planter.

Longview—The Stuckey Residence

It is possible that the Beaumont and Port Arthur projects attracted the attention of Clifford Hutsell of Dallas, who built a house for James F. Stuckey in Longview, Texas, in 1934-1935. Mr. Stuckey owned a dry goods store, but probably owned property in the oil fields (Black, 1998). The Stuckey House is a contributing property of the Nugget Hill Historic District (NR 1998). Its park-like gardens feature several pieces that are attributed to Rodriguez, including a petrified wood bandstand/gazebo and wishing well, concrete *faux* wood bridges, benches, and a “woven” basket. The date of this project indicates that it would have been built while Rodriguez was also working in Arkansas (see “Work in the United States”).

Houston – Woodlawn Garden of Memories

According to Carlos Cortés, Rodriguez created several pieces for the Houston cemetery, Woodlawn Garden of Memories, Inc., which was built in 1931 by the J.W. Metzler family (Cortés to Light). Other than Cortés’ information, there are no records documenting who created the *faux bois* work there or the date of its completion. At least five of the sculptural pieces in the cemetery are the work of Rodriguez—the 25’ tall “wooden” cross and its surrounding four benches; a flower planter basket; a 60’ long fallen “tree” bench; and an “Annie Laurie Wishing Chair.” The Wishing Chair is based on an 18<sup>th</sup> century legend of a Scots woman. “According to legend, fairies blessed the chair and today, if a couple sits in it, holds hands, and make a wish, it will come true” (Simpson, 1992, p.11). Plaques recounting this legend are placed near this chair and two additional ones built later by Rodriguez later in other cemeteries.

Rodriguez could have done this work about the time he was working for Clovis Hinds at Memorial Park Cemetery in Memphis, as records indicate that Rodriguez constructed the first Annie Laurie chair for Hinds about 1935. (See “Additional Work in the United States.”) Distinctive trademarks of his work including rough and smooth textured “wood,” peeling “bark,” “knotholes,” “insect borings” and pyramid-headed “bolts” are present in these pieces.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 13

Additional rustic works including fountains, planters, numerous benches and a rose arbor situated throughout the cemetery lack his fine attention to detail and were probably constructed by one of his assistants.

The Dallas Area

According to correspondence with Clovis Hinds and conversations with Manuela Theall, Rodriguez was in Dallas in 1942 and in 1945, but no documented work has been located there to date. At Laurel Land Cemetery, there is a "wood" chair attached to a "tree" trunk with horizontal "branches." An examination of this sculpture proved difficult as it is covered in ivy vines, that obscured any distinguishing details or a signature, if they exist.

Manuela Theall remembers that her uncle showed her a small wishing well that he had built around 1932-1934 on the east side of White Rock Lake (about 150 yards from the edge of the lake), and some baskets in front yards of residences around Dallas. She says that he was married when he was in Dallas (Theall to Light). Around 1945, Rodriguez received a commission to construct some "wooden" trash barrels for Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Ft. Worth. He was not proud of this work, and told Theall that the cemetery owner did not want to pay him what he asked, and that he "got what he paid for."

Castroville-- Moye Military Academy Grotto

Completed in 1945, the grotto at the Moye Military School is built of honeycomb Edwards limestone and bears a bronze plaque with the inscription, "Donated by the Mothers of the Moye Military School Cadets, May 13, 1945." Dionicio Rodriguez's signature is incised in concrete. Sister Martha Vrba, principal of the school during the 1940s, remembers that she and some of her "Moye boys" watched Rodriguez work on the grotto (Riche to Light). A 1946 monthly newsletter published by the Sister of Divine Providence reports on the opening of school in September, 1945:

"The boys were quite candid and outspoken in their appraisal of improvements. The older Cadets pointed with pride to the beautiful Grotto, a gift made last spring by their mothers. It is constructed of honeycomb rocks gathered from the vicinity and is located near the music studio."

(Family Circular. February, 1946)

The property, adjacent to US Highway 90 West in Castroville, Texas, was originally the site of St. Louis School, run by the Sisters of Divine Providence. In 1873, the first Motherhouse of their order in the United States and their first convent was built on the property. The property was owned for a time by the Oblate Fathers, and was repurchased by the Sisters of Divine Providence in 1938. They operated the Moye Military Academy, "one of the finest in the state," for 21 years. When the academy closed, the property reverted back to a convent for a few years and since 1985, it has been a center for retreats and renewal (Castroville Chamber of Commerce 2000: 25).

The 12' high grotto is constructed of the same honeycomb limestone rocks as the Stations of the Cross at San Antonio's St. Anthony of Padua Church, and the masonry technique is similar to the St. Anthony work. The grotto's 28' base tapers to a conical apex. Eleven wrought iron lamps placed on the grotto provide illumination, and two concrete "tree trunks" with cut-out niches serve as kneelers facing the grotto. Several hundred feet outside the Moye property, on the right side of US 90 West, is a planter outlined with "wood" planks, signed by Maximo Cortés, leading to speculation that Cortés might have accompanied Rodriguez to Castroville for the Moye project.

Part III: Additional Work in the United States

Around 1932, Rodriguez began working on large projects outside of Texas for several clients with whom he developed personal relationships that continued many years. Two of these clients were Justin Matthews and E. Clovis Hinds. A collection of ten years of correspondence between Rodriguez and Hinds, who built Memorial Park Cemetery in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 14

---

Memphis, Tennessee, provides many of the details of his work and travels outside Texas. Today, these letters are in the collection of Hinds' granddaughter, Katherine Hinds Smythe.

The following is a chronological summary of Rodriguez's work between 1932 and 1945, a period when he was often working on several projects simultaneously.

Little Rock, Arkansas: 1932-1936

From 1932 to 1936, Rodriguez worked for Justin Matthews in Arkansas at three parks, Crestview, Lakewood and the T. R. Pugh Memorial Park (NR 1986). Matthews had been in the cottonseed oil business before moving to North Little Rock where he became a real estate investor. He was an imaginative developer who employed a company architect, Frank Carmean, to design buildings for his projects, and planned promotional gimmicks to attract public interest. Justin Matthews provided Dionicio Rodriguez with a house, paid utilities, and a salary of \$2.00 an hour while he was working for him (Rodriguez to Hinds, 1934).

The most well-known of Matthews' undertakings is the Old Mill at the T.R. Pugh Memorial Park (Vosmik, 1986). The stone mill has a 10,000-pound working concrete water wheel that was built by Rodriguez. Other components of this park that appear to be Rodriguez's original designs include "...a twisted black locust bridge, a persimmon tree bridge, a plank wagon bridge, toadstools, fencing, fallen tree benches, a pump and trough" (Vosmik, 1986). To insure longevity of his work at T.R. Pugh Memorial Park, Rodriguez used copper rather than steel reinforcing bars. After the park was constructed, the mill was ... "featured in the opening credits of the movie "Gone With the Wind" (Vosmik, 1986). Pugh's Crestview Park contains two Rodriguez sculptures—a rustic shelter and a fallen "tree" bench.

Cambridge, Michigan: 1932

In 1932, Dionicio Rodriguez, joined by Ralph Corona and George Cordosa, went to Michigan to build St. Joseph's Shrine in the Township of Cambridge (NR nomination, McCourtie Park, 1991). Both Corona and Cardosa had worked with Rodriguez in Texas. In Cambridge, they built fourteen outdoor Stations of the Cross, depicting the *Via Dolorosa* (the sorrowful way) that Jesus walked to Calvary. The stations, illustrated with inset ceramic tile plaques, are mounted on various constructions, including a reclining cross, a ladder on artificial rocks, and a rustic hut similar to one in Crestview Park in Arkansas. The artisans also built rustic steps, archways and railings leading to a lake (Cortés to Light). While in Michigan in the 1930s, Corona and Cordosa also built 13 rustic bridges in McCourtie Park in the town of Somerset. The quality of the work indicates that they had perfected techniques learned from Rodriguez.

Clayton, New Mexico: 1933

B.C. Froman, a building contractor in Clayton, New Mexico, built an eclectic style house for himself and his wife in 1933. While traveling through San Antonio ca. 1933-1934, he arrived too late to visit the Alamo, but stopped to look at the tree sculpture in Alamo Plaza. He sought out the "Mexican nationals who were familiar with cement sculpture, and brought them to Clayton" where they built a Chinese style gate that was similar to the Japanese Tea Garden portal, a "log" fence, and hollow "tree" sculpture (Bullock, 1989). Upon inspection, these pieces indicate a definite relationship to Rodriguez's technique, but are not signed.

San Antonio: 1935

In about 1935, Rodriguez built a hollow "tree" shelter (demolished) for himself in San Antonio on Guadalupe Street where he stored his personal items while traveling around the country (Theall to Light). Frank Tovar, whose family sold Rodriguez the small piece land for his house, recalls the shelter being like both a tree and a cave.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 15

---

Memphis: 1935

Rodriguez began working with Clovis Hinds at Memorial Park Cemetery in Memphis in February 1935. Hinds sold his insurance agency to plan a cemetery similar to Forest Lawn in Los Angeles, which used "flat, ground level markers instead of headstones" (Beardsley 1995: 125). Hinds began developing his project in 1931 and corresponded with Rodriguez in 1933, although he did not hire him until 1935.

A brochure for the cemetery indicates that Hinds "envisioned a landmark cemetery marked by beauty and serenity." Rodriguez was hired by Hinds to "beautify the cemetery and reproduce certain bits of history, chiefly Biblical" (*Memorial Park*, n.d). Clovis Hinds stated, "It is good business for me to make the park into a spot of beauty and art... We want to create something that will attract people. People usually don't go to cemeteries unless they have a special interest there. We shall try to change that." (Roark, 1935). In 1935, Hinds spoke to the Annual Convention of the American Cemetery Owners Association in Detroit in an address titled "How to Make Memorial Parks Beautiful and Famous" (Vosmik 1991, Sec. 9, p.1).

Memorial Park Cemetery remains a remarkable tourist attraction in 2002. Major pieces built by Rodriguez include, Abrams's Oak (a hollow "tree" sculpture), a fallen "tree" bench, the Fountain of Youth, the cave of Machpelah, a natural "wood" bridge, the pool of Hebron and an Annie Laurie Wishing Chair. Rodriguez's Crystal Shrine Grotto, planned by Hinds was "the high point of the entire production" (*The Good Life*, 1975, pp. 8-9). Hinds and Rodriguez chose natural crystal formations from the Arkansas Ozarks to line the interior of the cave, which had holes on the surface allowing sunlight to sparkle on the rocks. Niches with scenes from the life of Christ, with backgrounds created by Rodriguez, line the interior of the Grotto and are filled with ceramic figures; some were stock figures purchased from a Boston firm and others were created by Memphis sculptors (Simpson 1992, pp. 16-19).

John Richmond, who worked for the cemetery, recalled, "...great crowds of people coming out to watch Rodriguez work, especially on Saturdays and Sundays." Mr. Hinds would be there and "loved to talk to people, telling them about plans for the finished work and describing what Rodriguez was doing." (Richmond to Smythe and Anthony). Richmond also told of a sea lion with a ball on his nose that Rodriguez sculpted for the restaurant, Davis White Spot. When the building was demolished, the sea lion disappeared (Richmond to Smythe and Anthony). Rodriguez continued to work intermittently for Hinds until 1939, but during that time, he also worked on projects for other clients."

Brentwood, Maryland: 1935

Rodriguez worked just outside of Washington, D.C., in Brentwood, Maryland, in 1935. He was hired by Lobell O. Minear who owned Lincoln Park Cemetery and also knew Clovis Hinds. The cemetery's cloister garden features a truncated vault ceiling that is believed to have been made by Rodriguez (telephone interview, Thompson to Light, 2002). Cracks in the ceiling reveal his unique construction method—the use of steel reinforcing bars, mesh wire, and cement.

While Rodriguez was in the Washington area, Hinds wrote him, advising him about his conduct there, as he said he (Hinds) was "better acquainted with Washington and its customs than yourself..." (Hinds to Rodriguez, 1935). Hinds also said that he would take care of Rodriguez's money for him, an arrangement that continued during their 11-year association. Hinds would deposit Rodriguez's salary in a bank account, or credit him for his work, and Rodriguez would write Hinds to send him money when he needed it. This arrangement and the amount of salary paid for various projects would later cause disagreements between the artisan and his client.

Early in 1937, Rodriguez invited Manuela Vargas (Theall), his 16-year-old niece, to come from Mexico to stay with him and accompany him on his travels. She arrived in Little Rock in May 1937, where he was doing some work for Matthews. Soon after she arrived, they drove to Washington, D.C., in Rodriguez's 1936 De Soto.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section E Page 16

---

Suitland, Maryland: 1937

With a recommendation from Hinds, Rodriguez had been hired by William Earl Harrison of Washington, D.C. to develop his cemetery, Cedar Hill, in Suitland, Maryland. Mr. Minear (owner of Lincoln Park Cemetery) was the manager of Cedar Hill, and it is possible that he recommended Rodriguez for this job. Rodriguez's niece revealed that this phase of the Cedar Hill Cemetery work was completed between May 3 and the first week of August 1937. Manuela said that they spent their weekends at the movies, where they could see a double feature and a stage show for 25 cents. Rodriguez enrolled her in a Catholic school, which she attended for a short time.

In a 1990 interview, cemetery manager Dorothy Richards recalled that when she was very young, she visited the cemetery and watched Rodriguez work. "...I remember that he was very secretive. No one could see what he was doing because he worked in a tent and wouldn't let anyone near" (Kazas 1990:7). Rodriguez built numerous sculptural pieces at Cedar Hill including a fallen "tree" bench, two "wooden" bridges, Chinese style lanterns, a hollow "tree" house, an Annie Laurie chair, and a large "Egyptian style" seat with embossed designs. Manuela Theall recalled that she made the molds for the seat's decoration, including a dragon figure and floral motifs.

Rodriguez and his niece left Washington and drove to Detroit, where he repaired earlier work on a church on Mack Avenue. They went on to Chicago, St. Louis and Memphis, stopping in each city for a few days.

Little Rock: 1937

In 1937, Rodriguez was having injections for his diabetes in Little Rock, but returned to work with Hinds. Hinds wrote Rodriguez in December 1937 that he wanted him to wait until better weather to continue to work, as ... "we cannot afford to have any of this work go bad on account of bad weather." He also added that he wanted the pending work to be "the best you have ever done, as it will be the work that will decide many new contracts for you in 1938 when we hold the National Convention of all the big cemeteries in the United States in Memphis..." (Hinds to Rodriguez 1937, 1). No records of this meeting exist, but it is very probable that the delegates visited Memorial Park Cemetery and saw Rodriguez's sculptures.

Birmingham, Alabama; Detroit, Michigan, and Little Rock, Arkansas : 1938

According to Manuela Theall, she and Rodriguez were in Birmingham, Alabama, from January through March 1, 1938, where he worked in Elmwood Cemetery. The owner of Elmwood, John Jemison, was an investment banker and land developer. Several of Rodriguez's pieces for this project were almost identical to some at Cedar Hill Cemetery, including the bridge, a Chinese lantern, and a fallen "tree" bench. In addition, he built a "thatched" roof shelter with "log" benches.

It is interesting to note that Rodriguez worked on five cemeteries during his lifetime. His rustic sculptures were appropriate for the "new" cemeteries that were being "...landscaped in the English picturesque garden style with winding paths, abundant, yet carefully planned trees and shrubs, punctuated by architectural memorials, all in imitation of the pastoral landscape paintings of the seventeenth century French artists Claude Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin" (Simpson 1992: 4).

In January 1938, Rodriguez visited Detroit and probably completed a bridge at the Detroit Zoo that bears his signature. The bridge is currently in storage (2002).

Information in the Hinds' letters indicates that in 1938, Rodriguez was also in Little Rock, planning to go to Mexico City. During this Mexico visit, he visited the Cacahuamilpa *grutas* (caves) in the state of Guerrero, and wrote Hinds (through his friend, letter writer, and translator, J.M. Rocha, Sr. of Little Rock) that "those (the caves) are wonderfool (sic) and he have in his mind to fix your cave with more experience with the grouts (sic)..." It appears that he returned to Memphis to work on the Crystal Cave.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section E Page 17

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

---

Chicago, Illinois and Little Rock, Arkansas: 1939

Dionicio Rodriguez spent six or seven weeks in Chicago in 1939, where he was probably working for Leonard Cowan who developed cemeteries including a Masonic burial park, Cedar Park, Calumet Park and Acacia Park in Nardridge, a Chicago suburb (Sclair, 1998: 13, 14). Each of these cemeteries has a "thatched" roof shelter with "log" seats.

In August of 1939, Hinds wrote Rodriguez that he wanted him to come back and touch up some of the colors that had faded. He told him that he would pay him \$1.50 an hour and \$2.50 a day for the helper. It is apparent that Hinds knew the kinds of chemicals that Rodriguez used for his tinting, as he wrote, "If you want me to order any coloring, send a list of colors, giving the number of pounds on the enclosed card" (Hinds to Rodriguez, August 24, 1939).

Carlos Cortés relates that in 1939, Rodriguez traveled to New York City to visit with a group that wanted to commission a project. He modeled a maquette, but the project apparently never materialized (Cortés to Light).

Through a recommendation from Clovis Hinds, Rodriguez was hired in 1939 by the President of Arkansas Power and Light, Harvey C. Couch, to work at two sites, Couchwood and Little Switzerland in Garland County, Arkansas. One of the most outstanding pieces at Little Switzerland is a barbeque pit disguised as a large tree. He also built a fallen "tree" bench, steps, planters and a "stump" that was used as a cold drink cooler (Vosmik 1986: 8).

Rodriguez's Later Activities 1942-1955

Dionicio Rodriguez's worsening diabetic condition had prompted Justin Matthews to write to Clovis Hinds in March 1935. Hinds made an appointment for Rodriguez with a Dr. Ruder who continued to treat him for several years. By 1941, Rodriguez wrote that he was not well, and was having treatments with the doctor. The final letter from Hinds to Rodriguez was mailed to Dallas in 1942. It appears that they had had a disagreement about money owed by Hinds to the artisan. Theall believes that Rodriguez was married to his second wife when he was in Dallas.

Only a few records are available about Rodriguez's activities from 1942 until his death in 1955. Theall says that he didn't travel much after 1942, and returned to San Antonio to live in his "tree" house, where he had a stove, some trunks, and a small cot. Frank Tovar remembers visiting him there, and Rodriguez would pay him and his siblings a penny for each gray hair they would remove from his head. His niece recalls that during the war years he worked on smaller pieces because it was difficult for him to acquire steel and concrete for large projects. She remembers some of this later work, such as deer, baskets and other decorative garden pieces that were stored in a yard at a home on General McMullen Drive in San Antonio (Theall to Light).

As previously noted, two of Rodriguez's last projects were completed after he returned to San Antonio; the portal for the Japanese Tea Garden in 1942 and the grotto at the Moyer Military Academy in Castroville, Texas in 1945. In the early 1950s, Rodriguez was commissioned to build a bridge for the Lake View Motel in Little Rock, Arkansas. The bridge (demolished) had realistic "log" rails along its length with large plant containers at regular intervals (Dean 1982: 1-3C). He also worked on the façade of the Jacala restaurant in San Antonio during this time.

Fellow artisan, Sam Murray, says that during Rodriguez's final years, his eyesight was failing. He would bring some of his work, which lacked the quality of his earlier projects, to Murray for him to sell (Murray to Pfeiffer and Light). According to Bill Green, Rodriguez's health continued to decline, and doctors wanted to remove one of his legs, but instead, amputated several of his toes (Green, personal files).

When Dionicio Rodriguez was hospitalized during his last illness, he asked Maximo Cortés to go to his "tree" house and look in his Bible. Cortés found \$500 that Rodriguez instructed him to use for his grave marker (Cortés to Light). He died

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section E Page 18

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

---

at the Robert B. Green Hospital of coronary occlusion on December 16, 1955, and was buried in San Fernando Cemetery #2.

**Chronology of Life and Work of Dionicio Rodriguez**

1891-Born in Toluca, Mexico, April 11  
1920s-Worked in Mexico, D.F., Mexico  
1924-Left Mexico D. F., Mexico and worked in Monterrey, Mexico and Laredo, Texas  
1926-Began working in the San Antonio, Texas area  
1926-Sweeny, Texas  
1929-Port Arthur, Texas  
1931- Beaumont, Texas  
1932-North Little Rock, Arkansas and Township of Cambridge, Michigan  
1933-Michigan and Clayton, New Mexico  
1934-Longview, Texas; and Dallas, Texas (possibly in 1932)\*  
1935-1939-Memphis, Tennessee\*\*  
1935-Washington, D.C. and San Antonio, Texas  
1937-Suitland, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; Chicago, Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; and Memphis Tennessee  
1938-Birmingham, Alabama  
1938-Guerrero, Mexico\*\*\* and Detroit, Michigan  
1939-Garland County, Arkansas; Chicago, Illinois; New York, New York  
1940-Houston, Texas  
1942-Dallas, Texas and San Antonio, Texas\*\*\*  
1945-Castroville, Texas  
1955-Died in San Antonio, December 16

\* Manuela Theall said that he worked in Dallas in either 1932 or 1934

\*\* Rodriguez worked intermittently for Clovis Hinds in Memphis, but would leave to work on commissions for other clients during these years

\*\*\* There were additional travels to Mexico and San Antonio, but definite dates are not known

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 19

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

**F. Associated Property Types**

Dionicio Rodriguez did his first work in the United States in Texas, and examples have been found at 12 sites across the state (as of 2003). Variations of some of these early designs are seen in Rodriguez's work done in six other states between 1935 and 1941. His rustic-style, cement sculptural pieces that have the appearance of wood and rocks include:

- Fences
- Gates
- Bridges
- Steps
- Grottoes
- Fountains
- "Hollow tree" shelters
- Tables
- Benches
- Stumps
- Chairs
- Building façade (one example)

Close inspection of his work reveals a careful attention to details and sensitive treatment of materials not always found the work of his peers. Despite the high quality of Rodriguez's work, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish his pieces from those of others because he did not always sign his pieces. Positive identification is further complicated by the scarcity of both primary and secondary source material.

Dionicio Rodriguez arrived in San Antonio during the time when many Mexican immigrants were settling in Texas as a result of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the ensuing years of political unrest in that country. One of these refugees was Rodriguez's first client in San Antonio, Dr. Aureliano Urrutia. It is speculated that Urrutia was familiar Rodriguez's work in Mexico and brought the artisan to Texas.

Like Doctor Urrutia, most of Rodriguez's clients were wealthy men who hired him to embellish their personal gardens, and and/or commercial properties. Many of Rodriguez's jobs came from word of mouth referrals. It is interesting to note that a large body of his work in Texas was done during the lean years of the Great Depression. His labor was cheap and the materials were inexpensive. Rodriguez wrote of his work, "It doesn't take much material or time, and gives wonderful results" (Rodriguez to Hinds, January 7, 1935).

Five of Dionicio Rodriguez's known projects in Texas, including a cemetery, were composed of groups of sculptures set in planned landscapes. Water was an important element at four of these sites, and flowing watercourses fed by fountains enhanced two of these—Miraflores and Eddington Court. The Phelan mansion (demolished) had a man made lake spanned by two rustic bridges, and the Marmion property has a gazebo sited on one of three islands in a man-made pond.

Owners of several of these properties used them as sites for large special events. Dr. Urrutia hosted gatherings for his friends and family at Miraflores, and in April 1931, he entertained delegates to the national convention of the American Association of Architects. Beaumont resident Emily Vaughn Jackson remembers style shows held to benefit San Anthony High School at the Phelan Mansion. Models, accompanied by harpist Hannah Lee Berry, the Phelan's niece, strolled across the bridges. An archival photograph taken at the Marmion property shows a large group of people gathered in and around the gazebo, and is labeled, "James Richard Marmion's Summer Camp...". Though Rodriguez's work at Memorial Park Cemetery in Memphis (NR 1999) is not included in this nomination, it is likely that those attending the 1938 meeting of the National Association of Cemetery Owners in that city gathered at the cemetery to see the artist's work.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 20

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

While some of Rodriguez's projects incorporate designs planned by his clients, it appears that he was given freedom to use his own imagination on other projects. The design for the Annie Laurie Wishing chair, first built by Rodriguez in 1935 for his Memphis client, Clovis Hinds, and later repeated in Texas and Maryland, has two possible origins. Julie Vosmik states that Hinds' scrapbook included a photo of a "Wishing Seat" designed by Paul P. Cret for Whitemarsh Memorial Park and of a pergola in Tombstone, Arizona (Vosmik 1991: 2). Lisa Simpson, former curator of the Dixon Gallery and Garden in Memphis, writes that the design was copied from one in Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale, California, and that blueprints found in Hinds' papers were probably furnished by Forest Lawn's owner, Hubert Eaton (Simpson, 1992: 3).

Terrain seems to have dictated designs for at least two sculptural pieces as seen at Miraflores. Because the garden's grounds slope toward the San Antonio River, steps were added to accommodate the change in elevation. These two sets of steps by Rodriguez are *faux bois*. One is bordered by large "boulders," and the other is flanked by vertical smooth "planed planks." These are the only long flights of steps executed by the artisan in Texas known at this time (2003).

A majority of Rodriguez's sculpted pieces in Texas can be categorized into groups that have distinctive characteristics. Three categories include "wood," "stone," and natural stone works. The bridges and fences have "bark" covered "branch" handrails, intertwined horizontal and diagonal "branches" for their guardrails, and smooth planed "logs" for their footpaths. Two gate entries are styled with crossed "tree trunks" at their apex. His "hollow tree" houses are modeled with smooth "bark" surfaces; one is lined with conch shells. All have openings for doors and/or windows and are of sufficient height for standing adults. One of the "tree" houses is utilized as a gate; others have "carved" interior seats. Archival photographs reveal that Rodriguez built scaffolding to facilitate construction of the "tree houses." Unfortunately, the "tree house" that he built for his home in San Antonio has been demolished.

Two "fallen tree" benches copy the growth pattern of Mesquite trees that are found in Rodriguez's native Mexico and in south Texas. (Occasionally, entire trees and/or single branches bend at a 90-degree angle, and continue to grow parallel with the ground.) His benches have smooth planed surfaces on the seats and backrests and rough "bark" on the exterior. The larger of the two is 36.5' long and has a planter sculpted in one end.

Many of Rodriguez's works are "wood" structures with bundled "straw" roofs known as *palapas* in Mexico. Using cement, he reproduced the technique in minute detail. The "straw" is bound into neat bundles, and positioned on the "log trusses" in parallel rows. The roofs are of various styles, hipped, gabled, and round (sometimes referred to as "mushroom"). Included in this group of structures are a "tree trunk" bus stop, six "slat" benches, two tables of "crosscut" planks with "log" benches, a circular "log" shelter enclosing a fountain, four gazebos (three of "logs" and "branches" and one of petrified wood), and an Oriental-style portal reminiscent of a Torii gate.

The Marmion and the Steves' gazebos have floors of wide smooth "timbers," roof supports of recognizable types of "wood trunks," and balustrades and brackets of "bark" covered "branches." Both have octagonal roofs capped with lanterns. The Marmion gazebo was also electrified and its lantern features glass panes in alternating openings. In comparison, the petrified wood gazebo at the Stuckey house has a thatched roof with a lantern, but the roof supports are of rock.

The Oriental-style gate at the Japanese Tea Garden in San Antonio was created in 1942, 11 years after Rodriguez built a similar portal and other pieces in New Mexico. Although the two projects are related in style and material, the scale of the San Antonio portal is more massive than the earlier work.

Additional "wood" sculptures include four "slat" benches, two "hewn timber" lamp poles, a couple's bench of sinuous, curving "branches," a cross of "bark covered" timbers, two "log" kneelers, "stumps," a bird house and a "frame" building façade with "log" trim.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 21

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Rodriguez's one known building façade in Texas created the appearance of a structure faced with horizontal "boards." "Tree branches" support a gabled, "thatched" roof portico. The door and five windows are trimmed with bark-covered logs."

Pyramid-headed "steel" bolts are present in many of the pieces, and countersunk "screws" appear on benches in the patio of the Governor's Palace and on the table at the Marmion property. Additional cement pieces that are not *faux bois* include two cactus plants (one was electrified to serve as a light pole), several small cacti, three woven basket planters (one faced with small stones) and a wall and a gate inset with conch shells.

During his early work in Mexico, Rodriguez became proficient in creating artificial rocks and stone. He is credited with creating the artificial "cut stone" facing on the sides and rear of the tile and bronze gate at Miraflores, where he also built "boulders," pathways, canals, a small grotto of "stalagmites" and "stalactites," and a fountain of layered "rock." This fountain design, made of successively larger layers of rock (from top to bottom) was repeated at two other sites. Water emerged at the apex, dripped down the layers into a base, and flowed into channels. An additional sculpture of *faux* "stone" includes the Annie Laurie chair of "cut stones."

Three works of natural honeycomb limestone were constructed in the San Antonio area during the early 1940s—two grottos and the Stations of the Cross. Manuela Theall said that during the World War II years, it was difficult for Rodriguez to acquire materials, and this might account for his use of readily available local rock.

Several publications state that his replication of the textures of wood and stone were so realistic that it was impossible to discern whether the sculptures were real or petrified. His career in the United States spanned a period of over twenty years, from 1924 to the early 1950s, and much of his work remains intact at 12 sites in Texas (2003). As a collection of *faux bois* sculpture designed and constructed by a skilled practitioner of this technique, numerous examples of Dionicio Rodriguez's work in Texas are eligible for National Register listing under Criterion C, at the local level of significance) in the area of Art.

Various works of Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas are nominated under this MPS, including one building and several sites, districts, and individual objects.

- The only **building** nominated under this context is the Jacala Restaurant in San Antonio, the façade of which was created by Rodriguez. It is unique among Rodriguez's known work in the state.
- Individually nominated **structures** include two gazebos, one bridge, and a trolley stop. All of these serve a particular function beyond being works of art. Boundaries for most have been defined to include only the footprint of the structure.
- Individually nominated **objects** include gates at the Chinese Sunken Garden and Buckeye Park, both in San Antonio. Boundaries have been defined to include only the footprint of each object.
- Many Rodriguez works in Texas are located in public spaces (such as Brackenridge Park in San Antonio), and designed landscapes (such as that found at the Woodlawn Garden Memorial Park in Houston), but not in such a concentration or arrangement that they *define* the landscape. In such instances, boundaries are drawn to include only individual properties of substantial size and scale, or small groupings of properties that retain historic arrangements.
- Small moveable **objects**, such as individual benches of common design, are not nominated individually if they are visually and physically separate from other works. Such small objects, however, are included as contributing elements of districts or small groupings that retain integrity of location. Often these objects are ancillary to larger structures, such as kneelers associated with a grotto, but some are arranged in large numbers to create a distinct entity, such as the stations of the cross associated with the St. Anthony Grotto in San Antonio, and are nominated as portions of **districts**.
- When feasible, large non-Rodriguez properties are included as contributing elements to **districts** if they constitute sizable portions of well-defined landscapes, such as the apartment buildings at Eddingston Court in Port Arthur.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section F Page 22

---

In other cases, the limited scope of the context limits the scope of some nominations; the entirety of Brackenridge Park, for example, may be eligible as a district for reasons well beyond the significance of individual sculptural works found within its borders, but this significance has not yet been fully explored.

- The garden at Miraflores in San Antonio is nominated as a **site**, as a designed landscape with a high concentration of Rodriguez works, which should be interpreted as a single entity.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section H Page 23

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

---

**Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

This MPS is the result of a five-year investigation by Patsy Light and Maria Pfeiffer who were awarded a grant by the San Antonio Conservation Society in 1997 to assist in the cost of film and processing of photographs. The original goal of the researchers was to document Dionicio Rodriguez's large body of work in San Antonio for a National Register nomination, but as they began their work, it became apparent that there was additional work not only in other parts of Texas but also throughout the United States that merited documentation. Julie Vosmik's National Register nominations for Rodriguez's work at five sites in Arkansas (1986) and at the Memorial Park Cemetery in Memphis, Tennessee (1991), provided us with valuable information and bibliographic source material. One of the most important of her sources was a series of letters written between Clovis Hinds, owner of Memorial Park Cemetery, and Rodriguez that spanned a period of nine years, from 1933-1942. Copies of this correspondence, which were given to us by Hinds' granddaughter, Katherine Hinds Smythe, not only yielded insight to the personality of both men, but afforded a record of Rodriguez's work and his travels during this period.

We were fortunate to have the opportunity to record oral histories of individuals who knew Rodriguez. Through the aid of Johanna Phelan, whose grandfather had hired the artisan in the 1930s to work on sculptures at his Beaumont, Texas residence, we located and interviewed Manuela Theall Vargas, Rodriguez's niece, who came from Mexico to accompany Rodriguez to his various jobs throughout the United States during 1937-1938. Mrs. Theall, who shared her personal collection of archival photographs with us (copies of many of them are included with this nomination), knew her uncle while he lived in Mexico before he arrived in San Antonio ca. 1924. Interviews with Sam Murray, also a *faux bois* craftsman, who shared personal recollections of his association and work with Rodriguez and Mrs. Guadalupe Del Toro, who traveled with her husband, Rodriguez and others to jobs in Port Arthur and Beaumont, also provided us with not previously published information.

Several individuals who have been interested in Rodriguez's life and his work generously shared information as well as their personal files: Dr. Bill Green, Curator of History at the Panhandle-Plains Museum, Canyon, Texas; Mrs. Ruth Aubey, Beaumont, Texas; Stanley Schmidt and Carlos Cortés, both of San Antonio. Schmidt and Cortés also granted us interviews and allowed us to photocopy important documents and photographs. Tom Shelton, photo archivist at the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures, was very helpful in locating archival photographs. Vertical files in San Antonio libraries: The San Antonio Central Library, Texana -Genealogy Department; The San Antonio Conservation Society and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas yielded valuable information. Additional interviews and conversations with many individuals (see Bibliography, Section 9), site visits, and photography by the authors and others further augmented our documentation.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section I Page 24

---

**Bibliography**

Primary and Secondary Sources

- Allen, Paula. "Cementville's Little Shrine is Still a Treasure." *San Antonio Express News*, San Antonio, Texas: December 23, 2001, p. 5G
- Aubey, Ruth. The Cement Art Works of Dionicio Rodriguez," a personal collection of papers and photographs.
- Aubey, Ruth. Numerous telephone conversations, faxes and E-mails, 1995-2002
- Aubey, Ruth. Letter to Patsy Light, January 31, 1996.
- Barker, W.E. "Beauty in Concrete Wood," *Popular Mechanics*, October 1927: pp. 585-587.
- Beardsley, John. *Gardens of Revelation: Environments of Visionary Artists*: New York, London and Paris; Abbeville Press, 1995. pp. 125-131.
- Bechtol, Ron. "Home is Where the Art Is." *San Antonio Light*, San Antonio, Texas: April 1, 1984, pp. 29-33.
- Black, Norman. *The Nugget Hill Historic District*, National Register of Historic Places, May 1, 1998.
- Blakely, D. Ray. Telephone interview with Patsy Light; Clayton, New Mexico, February 12, 1998.
- Bullock, Mike. "Cement Sculpture Adorns Colorful Clayton House." *Union County Leader*, Clayton, New Mexico; November 15, 1989.
- Carson, Chris and William McDonald. *A Guide to San Antonio Architecture*. San Antonio, Texas: American Institute of Architects, San Antonio Chapter, 1986, pp. 123, 127, 128
- Castroville Area Chamber of Commerce. *Castroville Area Visitor Guide, Volume 10, 2000*. Castroville, Texas: Castroville Chamber of Commerce, 2000, p.23
- Ciarrochi Maria. "A place to pray." *Today's Catholic*, San Antonio, Texas: March 15, 1996, p.3
- Cline, Roy. Fax to Patsy Light; April 22, 1998.
- Conversations with Katherine Lateer, Carlos Cortés, Rosemary Urrutia Leon, Christian Amberson, Emily Vaughan Jackson, Frank Tovar, Adelfa Quinones, Eddie Reyes, Lucille Hooker, Cindy Roundtree, Diane White, Cecilia Steinfeldt, Martha Utterback, Tom Shelton, Mark Cooper, Johanna Phelan, Bradley Brooks, James Pearson, Ruth Aubey, Patty Elizondo, Dora Guerra, Rodney Dzuik, "Pinto" Bean, Dr. A.A. Urrutia, Betsy Rogers, Michelle Mears, Bob Parvin, Jim Steele, Rosalind Rock, Jack Gorman, Don Weber, Sister maragraet Riche, Lloyd Jary, Nina Eckstein, Sister Mary Ann Domagalski, David Satlworth, Kelly Sheftal.
- Cortés, Carlos. Interview with Patsy Light; February 20, 1998.
- Dean, Jerry. "Motel Row is Vanishing." *Arkansas Gazette*, Little Rock, Arkansas: September 5, 1992, pp. 1-3c.
- Dams, Bernd H. and Andrew Zega. *Pleasure Pavilions and Follies: in the Gardens of the Ancien Regime*. Paris and New York: Flammarion, 1995, p. 161.
- Del Toro, Mrs. Guadalupe and Emma Bailey. Telephone interview with Patsy Light; San Antonio, Texas, December 18, 1998.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section I Page 25

---

Del Toro, Mrs. Guadalupe. Taped interview with Maria Pfeiffer and Patsy Light; San Antonio, Texas, December 21, 1998.

*Family Circular*, Volume XIII, No. 5, February 1946. Published monthly by the Congregation of Sisters of Divine Providence.

Fisher, Lewis. *Saving San Antonio*. Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 1996. pp. 123-127.

Field, Stephen L., Ph. D. Fax to Patsy Light, October 2, 2001.

George, Mary Carolyn Hollers. *O'Neil Ford, Architect*. College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1992, p. 156.

Goetz, Robert. "Wood-like Sculptures Fate Uncertain." *The North San Antonio Times*, San Antonio, Texas: November 3, 1986, pp. 1-3.

Green, Bill. Letter to Julie Vosmik, June 5, 1984.

Green, Bill. Personal files re: Dionicio Rodriguez

Green, Bill. Telephone conversation with Patsy Light, April 4, 2002.

Guthrie, Wayne. Telephone interview with Patsy Light, May 5, 2002.

Hermanson, Renee. "Shelter May See Trolley Lines Again." *The North San Antonio Times*, San Antonio, TX: November 6, 1980: p. 11.

Hinds, E. Clovis. Unpublished letters to Dionicio Rodriguez, October, 26, 1933 to February 28, 1942. Courtesy of Katherine Hinds Smythe; Memphis, Tennessee.

Hunt, Mary Ellen. Interview with Patsy Light; Beaumont; Texas, Spring, 1998.

Kazas, Tom. "Historic Sculptures to Die For." *Washington Post Magazine*: January 21, 1990: p.7.

Lambeth, Laura. "Old Cement Plant Site Rescued." *San Antonio Express News*, San Antonio, Texas, February 11, 1993, Section G, pp. 1, 8.

Maricle, Curtis. Telephone interview with Patsy Light; June 4, 2002.

Marmion, Jean. Telephone interview with Patsy Light; June 4, 2002

Marshall, Anthony. "Dreams of the Orient" *Conde Nast Traveler*, July 1997, pp. 139-156.

Murray, Sam. Taped interview with Maria Pfeiffer and Patsy Light; Mico, Texas; February 19, 1998

*Port Arthur News*. "Eddingston's Empire; Ambrose T. Eddingston Brought Caribbean Flair to Port Arthur." April 8, 1990. PP: 1-8 C.

Roarck, Eldon. "Strolling with Eldon Roarck." *Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee: June 20, 1935

Rodriguez, Dionicio. Unpublished letters to E. Clovis Hinds, January 7, 1935 to February 2, 1941. Courtesy of Katherine Hinds Smythe; Memphis, Tennessee.

Rodriguez, Dionicio. Letter to E. Clovis Hinds, January 7, 1935.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section I Page 26

---

Rutter, William E. *W.H.L. McCourtie Estate*. National Register of Historic Places, December, 6, 1991.

*San Antonio Express News*. San Antonio, Texas: September 14, 1887: p.9G

Sclair, Helen. Letter to Maria Pfeiffer, July 7, 1988.

Sclair, Helen. "Dionicio Rodriguez, 1891-1955." *Association of Gravestone Studies Quarterly Newsletter*, Vol. 22: Number 1; Greenfield, Massachusetts; Winter 1998: pp. 14-15.

St. Louis, Missouri, Kansas-Texas Railroad. *San Antonio, As Seen by a Northern Visitor*. 1930, pp. 14, 21.

San Antonio, Texas City Directory, 1924-1925, 1955-1956.

Schmidt, Stanley. "Dionicio Rodriguez" monograph, February 29, 1980.

Schmidt, Stanley. Interview with Maria Pfeiffer and Patsy Light; San Antonio, Texas, March 7, 1996.

Schmidt, Stanley. Interview with Maria Pfeiffer and Patsy Light; San Antonio, Texas, February 6, 1998.

Schmidt, Stanley. "The Concrete Art of Dionicio Rodriguez" (monograph based on interviews with J.R. Kagay and Richard Rodriguez, Sr.), n.d.

Schroll, Eleanor. Letter to Mr. And Mrs. Clyde Sowers, January 29, 1968.

Seaman, Linda. Letter to Patsy Light; April 17, 1998.

*Seasons Newsletter* (a publication of Memorial Park and Funeral Home, Memphis, Tennessee), "Search for Rodriguez Starts Nationwide." Summer, 1983, Vol. 6, No. 2.

*Seasons Newsletter* (a publication of Memorial Park and Funeral Home, Memphis, Tennessee), "Arkansas Historians Join in Rodriguez Search." Spring 1984, Vol. 7 No. 1.

Sellers, Dr. John. Telephone interview by Patsy Light; Clayton, New Mexico; February 13, 1998.

Sellers, Dr. John. Letter to Patsy Light, February 20, 1998.

Simpson, Lisa. "Memphis Memorial Park; A 20<sup>th</sup> Century Folk Art Collaboration," Unpublished manuscript provided by the Tennessee Smithsonian Art and Sculpture Inventory Survey, 1992.

Smithsonian Research Information System, Long View for Smithsonian American Art Museum, Inventories of American Painting and Sculpture.

Smythe, Katherine and Dale Anthony. Interview with John Richmond; Memphis, Tennessee; March 25, 1983.

Smythe, Katherine. Telephone visit with Patsy Light; Memphis, Tennessee; May 17, 2002.

Smythe, Katherine. Letter to Patsy Light, May 24, 2002.

Spanish Governor's Palace Inventory. San Antonio Conservation Society Records, courtesy of Norma Ward, manager.

Steinfeldt, Cecilia. *San Antonio Was*. San Antonio, Texas: The San Antonio Museum Association, 1978. pp.13-14.

Theall, Manuela Vargas. Taped interview with Patsy Light; Arlington, Texas, June 22, 2000 (By special arrangement with Johanna Phelan). Telephone conversations March 27, 2002, April 3, 2002, May 30, 2002.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas MPS  
Name of Multiple Property Submission

Section I Page 27

---

Theall, Manuela Vargas. Taped interview with Johanna Phelan, August, 2002.

Thompson, Joe. Telephone interview with Patsy Light, June 11, 2002.

Tibbits, Ann Cain. "Stone Werks-A Successful Adaptation." *San Antonio Conservation Society News*, October 1995.

Tyler, Ron, ed. et. al. *New Handbook of Texas*, Vol. 5: Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1996, pp. 652-653.

Uhler, David. "Family Tree." *San Antonio Express News*, San Antonio, Texas: August 13, 1995, pp. 1H-4H. 1998, p.1B, 3B.

University of Texas at San Antonio Institute of Texan Cultures, Archival Photography Department.

Urrutia, Dr. A.A.. *Bodas de Oro del Doctor Aureliano Urrutia*, San Antonio, Texas, Artes Graficas, June 1946

Urrutia, Dr. A.A. *Pinacoteca*, San Antonio, Texas, n.d.

Urrutia, Dr. A.A., III Telephone interview with Patsy Light, January 14, 1998.

Vaux, Calvert. *Villas and Cottages; A Series of Designs Prepared for Execution in the United States*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1864, pp. 292, 288.

Vertical files of the San Antonio Central Library, Texas History Department.

Vertical files of the San Antonio Conservation Society.

Vosmik, Julie. *Arkansas Sculptures of Dionicio Rodriguez*. National Register of Historic Places, December 4, 1986.

Vosmik, Julie. *The Sculptures of Dionicio Rodriguez at Memorial Park Cemetery*. National Register of Historic Places, January 31, 1991.

Walker, Tom. "Father and Son Team Creates with Concrete." *The San Antonio Light*, San Antonio, Texas, February 12, 1989. Section D, pp. 1, 7.

Weber, Tanya and Tom Kazas. "Sleuth Uncovers Mystery of Artist." *The Chronicle*. Little Rock, Arkansas. Quapaw Quarter Association: February-March, 1987.

Westkaemper, Sarah C. "Three Twentieth Century Gardens: A Heritage of Excellence in San Antonio." Unpublished thesis submitted to Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University for Master of Arts degree, 1985.

Woodward, George E. *Woodward's Architecture and Rural Art. No. I-1867*. New York: George E. Woodward, 1869. pp. 56, 68, 119.