



## Guest column

Tom Linton is a frequent contributor to The Daily News.

# Hanging of 'The Mother of Texas'

To my knowledge, nothing has been written about the events that led up to Jane Long being hung at the state Capitol.

It was accomplished through the joint efforts of a group on Bolivar Peninsula, a Galveston County commissioner and the second-highest elected office holder in Texas, the lieutenant governor.

This latest event in Jane Long's life started simply — a single letter containing only 113 words — but that was enough.

Jane Long known, best as "The Mother of Texas," experienced many hardships during the time she

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spent on Bolivar Peninsula, but hanging was not one of them.

Jane Herbert Dent Wilkinson met and married James Long in Natchez, Miss. Long, a former U.S. Army surgeon in the War of 1812, served at the Battle of New Orleans.

So equipped with all that military experience James Long decided to become a "filibuster" and go down and free Texas from Mexico.

Long's first filibuster expedition into Texas was in 1819. He and his band were successful in capturing Nacogdoches. His followers proclaimed James Long the first president of the Republic of Texas.

Long and his family eventually ended up on Bolivar Peninsula, living in a fortification he constructed, Fort Las Casas.

They lived in a crude adobe structure with little furniture and few conveniences. An uprising in Mexico prompted Long to undertake a second filibustering expedition in 1821.

Long left behind his wife, Jane, her young maid and their 5-year-old daughter. His parting words were, "I hope to be back in about three weeks, and I'm leaving 50 soldiers here to protect you."

The expedition was unsuccessful. Long was captured, shot and killed while imprisoned in Mexico.

Jane, not knowing of his fate, continued to await his return.

As Long's absence lengthened, the inhabitants began to abandon Bolivar. Those last to leave begged Jane to go with them.

She said: "My husband left me here, and I'll stay until he returns."

Thus only Jane, the two

young girls and her newborn, were left alone to try to survive on their own.

During her futile 11-month vigil awaiting the return of her husband, Jane gave birth to her daughter, Mary James, on Dec. 21, 1821.

The winter was so severe that Galveston Bay froze over in spots and, so for food, they chopped fish and ducks out of the frozen bay.

After surviving all of this, she was hung in the State Capitol — well at least her picture was.

So, how was this accomplished?

Margo Johnson, a director of the Jane Long Foundation, wrote a letter to Galveston County Commissioner Stephen H. Holmes stating: "We need your help in our quest for recognition of Jane Long, the Mother of Texas. Hurricane Ike dealt a devastating blow to Bolivar Peninsula. Yet the vibrant people of our community are following Jane Long's example of survival."

Commissioner Holmes contacted Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and forwarded the letter to him. Dewhurst replied, "I have forwarded your letter to John Sneed, executive director with the Texas State Preservation, for appropriate action."

That appropriate action turned out to be that the Jane Long Society and the Bolivar Peninsula Cultural Foundation were "given permission to present to the state for display in the capitol building a portrait" they commissioned to have "made from an original painting belonging to the Fort Bend Museum."

And so at 1:30 p.m. Nov. 18, in the Capitol, Jane Long was hung in a most auspicious location, The Legislative Reference Library.

Hangings are often times questionable affairs.

This one was not.

It was, in fact, most appropriate.