

# NARRATIVE TEXTS

## Jane Long, “Mother of Texas,” 1798-1880

Orphaned as a child, married at age 16, a mother at 18, and a widow at 23, Jane Long survived by pluck and perseverance as Texas emerged onto the world stage. In 1819 her husband led a filibustering expedition from Mississippi with the goal of wresting Texas from Spain. Pregnant Jane stayed behind until her baby was born, then set out to follow him with infant Rebecca, toddler Ann, and slave girl Kian.<sup>1</sup>

Along the way Jane fell ill and reluctantly left her daughters with relatives in Louisiana. She finally caught up with her husband at Nacogdoches, Texas, but baby Rebecca died before the couple could return to claim their children.

James Long soon departed on a mission to recruit the pirate Lafitte. Jane remained at Nacogdoches but fled in alarm at the sign of approaching Spanish troops. For a brief time, the family reunited, then James resolved to seek more volunteers for his cause. He left Jane, Ann, and Kian in a fort on Bolivar Peninsula near Galveston Island.

The quest went awry when James was captured, sent to Mexico City, and killed. Pregnant again and awaiting his return, Jane insisted on staying at the fort through the winter even as other occupants drifted away because of lack of food. She was alone except for Kian and Ann when she gave birth to her third daughter on December 21, 1821. An immigrant party passing nearby rescued the starving refugees. Little Mary James Long lived only until age two.

Jane was granted land in Texas as part of Austin’s colony. In 1832 she purchased an inn in Brazoria and ran it with the help of her surviving daughter and Kian. Prominent leaders of the Texas Revolution met here to discuss politics. Five years later Jane opened another inn and developed her land grant into a prosperous plantation. By 1861 she managed more than 2,000 acres.<sup>2</sup>

An ardent Confederate supporter, Jane rejected products of Northern manufacture and wore cotton clothes made on her own plantation during the Civil War.<sup>3</sup>

Jane was not, as sometimes claimed, the first English-speaking woman to give birth in Texas.<sup>4</sup> Yet by her unwavering tenacity, she earned the title “Mother of Texas.”



### Quotation

*In person she is tall . . . a beautiful figure . . . with the energies of masculine vigor yet moving with a grace that is wholly and truly feminine . . . she will fascinate her auditor by the ease and fluency with which she can descant on general topics.*—An admirer describing Jane Long at age 30<sup>5</sup>

### Photo

ITC 74-263. Dudley G. Wooten, *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, vol. 1, Dallas: Wm. G. Scarff, 1898.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Long’s history depends primarily on her own story told to Mirabeau B. Lamar in 1837, when he was gathering material for a history of Texas. Sources consulted for biographical information in this article are Anne A. Brindley, “Jane Long,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 56:2 (October 1952), pp. 211-38; Margaret Swett Henson, “Long, Jane Herbert Wilkinson,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/LL/flo11.html> (March 30, 2005); Anne Adams, “Jane Wilkinson Long, Mother of Texas,” *History’s Women: The Unsung Heroines*, online <http://www.historyswomen.com/earlyamerica/JaneWilkinson.html> (August 10, 2005); “Jane Long,” Texas Living History Association, online <http://www.texaslivinghistory.org/longbio.html> (April 8, 2005); “Jane Long,” East Texas Historical Association, <http://www.easttexashistorical.org/programs/gone/long.html> (April 8, 2005); Ruthe Winegarten, *Texas Women: A Pictorial History from Indians to Astronauts* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1986), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Henson, “Long, Jane,” *Handbook of Texas Online*.

<sup>3</sup> Brindley, “Jane Long,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, p. 237.

<sup>4</sup> Censuses between 1807 and 1826 show a number of children born in Texas to Anglo-American mothers prior to 1821. See Henson, “Long, Jane,” *Handbook of Texas Online*.

<sup>5</sup> “J.C. Clopper’s Journal and Book of Memoranda for 1828,” *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* 13, pp. 59-60, cited in Brindley, “Jane Long,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, pp. 235-36.

<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Charles Milby to Marie Doncy, *Houston Post*, February 24, 1924, cited in Brindley, “Jane Long,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, p. 238.