

## Dallas Historic Marker unveiled at J.L. Long

On Tuesday, April 19, 2005, at 6 pm, on the lawn of 72 year old DISD J.L.Long Middle School in the Dallas Independent School District, Principal Joseph Showell unveiled its Dallas Historic Marker designation plaque at a ceremony at the school located in historic East Dallas, to the applause of assembled past and current J.L. Long principals, J.L. Long PTA presidents, parents, and students of the school, DISD administrators, City officials and interested community members. After entertainment presented by the JL Long orchestra, and the presentation of the colors, the national anthem and pledge of allegiance led by the school's JROTC Color Guard, Beth Bentley, the former JL Long parent responsible for heading up the committee to gain historic recognition for the school, gave a brief history of the school and the quest to obtain the designation.

### History:

As the “junior high” movement swept the nation in the early 1930’s, Dallas educators readily embraced the notion, realizing the need for a transitional period between Elementary School and High School. J. L. Long was the second Junior High School built in Dallas, opening its doors to students in September of 1933. The enrollment the first year was 550 students. (Current enrollment exceeds 750.)

The architects were Walter Sharp and Ralph Bryan. Both were collaborative architects for many of the buildings in Fair Park built for the 1936 Centennial Exposition. Renowned architect Mark Lemmon who designed adjacent Woodrow Wilson High School, was the consulting architect for Long’s addition in 1952, and later was the architect for the 1959 addition.

The architectural style is modified Elizabethan—not quite as traditional or formal as Woodrow, but still with some of the characteristics—dark red brick, the castle like turret at the auditorium, and the fancy finials along the top. Art Deco was becoming the popular style in the early 30’s—you can see this in some of the decorative scroll work and stylizing on the front of the building. There is a lot of symbolism found on the exterior front of the building—the carved books above each entrance represent the “Book of Knowledge”, and reflect "1933" as the year of the opening of the school, the two baskets on either side of the entrance represent the “Fruits of Knowledge”. The carved beehive symbolizes “Community, cooperation and hard work, and the sweetness that comes as a result”.

C.W. Morris was principal for the first 16 years. He thought of the handsome new

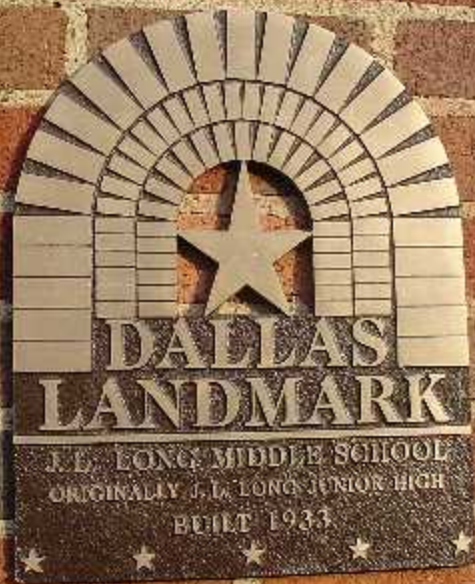
school as his ship, and he its captain, saying, "We run a tight ship!" Thus came the nautical theme--the athletic teams were (and still are today) referred to as the Buccaneers, the student newspaper was entitled The Long Log, and the student handbook was known as the Anchor.

In 1934, students watched as well-known local artist Olin Travis painted the "Food" mural in the school library. It was one of the WPA arts projects produced in Dallas during the Depression. Mr. Travis is also known for two murals he painted in the Hall of State at Fair Park.

John Lawson Long, the school's namesake, was Superintendent of Dallas schools at the turn of the 20th century. He made many contributions to the Dallas Educational System and helped lay the foundation for the Dallas School District. Mr. Long died in June 1933. The Dallas School Board seeking to honor his memory chose to name the new Junior High School in his honor. Mr. Long's resolve to provide students with a classical education, as well as build strong character, still continues today.

At the reception that followed in the school's Library, Susan Travis, granddaughter artist Olin Travis who painted the WPA mural in the Library, shared some insight into her grandfather's work. She brought along her small personal Olin Travis painting, which unbeknownst to her until recently viewing the Library mural, was actually incorporated into the corner of the mural. She presented the school with a picture of her grandfather which will hang in the Library.

DISD School Board Trustee Ron Price (District 9 where J.L. Long resides) also thanked those involved in acquiring the designation, including City Councilwoman Veletta Lill (Council District 14) who was present, and informed the crowd that Frances James (cemetery historian, Landmark commissioner for District 7), who was present and attended JL Long Middle School in 1935, two years after its opening, had just been honored with the naming of the Frances James Auditorium in the new Elementary School currently under construction in DISD. Linda Hale Buchanan, president of the largest and most active middle school PTA in DISD at Long, also announced that JL Long's competitive science team had, the previous weekend at the State TMSA competition in San Antonio, earned the number one ranking of Division 4A middle schools in the State in Science, and the number three ranking in the State in three Mathematic competition categories. The middle school has long boasted award winning programs in music, math, science and athletics, and is slated for bond construction to begin soon of an additional building to house the movement of 6th grade to the middle school in the fall of 2006.



DALLAS  
LANDMARK

J.E. LONG MIDDLE SCHOOL  
ORIGINALLY J.E. LONG JUNIOR HIGH  
BUILT 1933

