



## San Jacinto Loses a Heroine

Jan DeVault, who worked tirelessly over the past two decades to restore San Jacinto Battleground and raise awareness of the importance of the battle won there, passed away last weekend. Her priority was her family, but she will always be remembered as a leader in the movement to promote and preserve the battleground so that visitors could better understand and visualize the sequence of events that led to and followed the Battle of San Jacinto.

Jan seems to have been associated with San Jacinto most of her life, starting with her birthday, April 21, San Jacinto Day. She participated in and served in leadership roles with the San Jacinto Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas and served on the DRT's Board of Managers at the Alamo. She was appointed by Governor George Bush and reappointed by Governor Rick Perry to serve as a public member of the San Jacinto Historical Advisory Board, whose mission is to review the policies and operations of San Jacinto Battleground and advise Texas Parks and Wildlife Department on the proper historical development of the battleground. In that position she helped organize San Jacinto Day ceremonies at the battleground for many years and was instrumental in the development of TPWD's Master Plan at the site which promotes a preservation objective. She was also the author of *The Ladies and the Battlefield*, a definitive account of the battleground preservation efforts led by the DRT in the 1890s and early 1900s.

Her most singular accomplishment at the battleground was her involvement in the creation of the non-profit San Jacinto Battleground Association (also known as the San Jacinto Battleground Conservancy) in 2003. The SJBA is the first and only non-profit organization devoted to the preservation of the historic integrity of the battleground. Jan served as the organization's first president and held that position until 2016.

Under her stewardship, the SJBA sponsored the annual Battle of San Jacinto Symposium which completed its 17<sup>th</sup> year last month. Jan was also instrumental in the SJBA's acquisition of several acres of private property adjacent to the state park for the purpose of preserving those sites as part of the historic battlefield landscape. Jan took the lead on many archeological projects that led to the discovery of hundreds of battle artifacts and enhanced knowledge of the battle and its participants. The most spectacular archeological project was the discovery of Col. Juan Almonte's surrender site near Peggy's Lake in 2009, which led to international publicity for the battleground. Jan also arranged funding and coordination for native prairie seed plantings at the battlefield and participated in federal government historical reviews of new pipelines, Battleship Texas restoration, and other construction projects to help eliminate or minimize their adverse effects on the historic integrity of the 1836 landscape. She was a leader in defending the site against industrial encroachment and worked with adjacent industries to make them better aware of their impacts on the battleground. Jan often had to overcome obstacles, but her persistence in promoting the preservation mission of the site and devotion to that objective has left the battleground a better place. Her legacy and example of volunteer work will benefit countless of future generations of Texans.

Jan was a fifth generation Texan and graduated from UT-Arlington with a degree in history. She grew up in Midland, worked most of her life in the oil and gas industry, and served on the boards of two publicly-traded oil and gas companies. Among her many honors are the San Jacinto Descendants' highest award, the "San Jacinto Award," the San Jacinto Symposium's coveted "Hero of San Jacinto" prize, and recognition from the Sons of the Republic of Texas and other patriotic Texas groups. She was preceded in death by her husband John DeVault, who passed away in August 2016, and is survived by her two sons, Chris and Bryan, and their families.