

By: Hopson

H.C.R. No. 34

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, The State of Texas has customarily recognized a
2 variety of official state symbols as tangible representations of
3 the state's historical and cultural heritage; and

4 WHEREAS, The Texas State Railroad, an East Texas fixture for
5 more than a century, had its origins in the iron-industry boom that
6 East Texas experienced in the 1870s and 1880s; in 1875 the state
7 legislature authorized construction of a new penitentiary near Rusk
8 in order to develop the iron-ore resources of the area, as well as
9 to relieve overcrowding at the penitentiary in Huntsville; the
10 ensuing iron works at the East Texas Penitentiary provided material
11 for the present State Capitol, including the iron that was used in
12 the building's columns and dome; and

13 WHEREAS, To facilitate the transport of iron ore for the
14 smelter and foundries, as well as timber for the prison's sawmill,
15 construction was begun in 1893 on a line known officially as the
16 Texas State Railroad; the first five miles of track opened in 1896,
17 and by 1909 the road had been extended to Palestine in adjacent
18 Anderson County; and

19 WHEREAS, In addition to hauling raw materials to the
20 penitentiary, the railroad offered regular passenger and freight
21 service from 1907 to 1921; prison inmates, who had constructed the
22 entire line, made up the train crew, except for the engineer, during
23 much of this period; and

24 WHEREAS, The iron works at the prison closed in 1913, and

1 eight years later the state began leasing the track of the Texas
2 State Railroad to private companies; over the next half-century the
3 line served in particular to move lumber and timber products; and

4 WHEREAS, In 1972, after most of the road had remained unused
5 for several years, the Texas Legislature conveyed the line to the
6 Parks and Wildlife Department; at the urging of rail enthusiasts,
7 and after studying the feasibility of such a project, it was decided
8 to restore the line as part of a state historical park and to
9 dedicate the complex to the preservation and interpretation of the
10 country's railroad heritage; and

11 WHEREAS, On July 4, 1976, as part of the nation's
12 Bicentennial celebration, the Texas State Railroad State
13 Historical Park opened to the delight of countless citizens across
14 the state; in 2002, more than 130,000 people visited the park,
15 including 83,000 from outside the area; of those visitors, 41,110
16 took a ride on one of the trains that makes the run through the piney
17 woods and rolling hardwood creek bottoms between Palestine and
18 Rusk; and

19 WHEREAS, A fully self-contained system, the Texas State
20 Railroad operates four steam engines and four antique diesel
21 locomotives; in addition, it maintains a complete steam-engine
22 restoration shop, 29 miles of track, and 24 bridges, including one
23 over the Neches River; and

24 WHEREAS, Included in the railroad's stock are Steam Engine
25 No. 201, donated by the City of Abilene and once used by the Texas &
26 Pacific Railroad; Steam Engine No. 300, donated by Temple
27 Industries in Pineland; Steam Engine No. 500, owned at one time by

1 the City of San Angelo; and Steam Engine No. 610, operated by the
2 Texas & Pacific between Shreveport and El Paso until 1950 and
3 displayed in Fort Worth for a number of years; in the 1970s the
4 publisher and philanthropist Amon G. Carter, Jr., financed the
5 restoration of No. 610, and the engine became one of two that pulled
6 the Freedom Train through Texas during the Bicentennial; and

7 WHEREAS, Over the years, the railroad has received
8 significant attention in many quarters and has been featured in
9 television series, documentaries, commercials, music videos, and
10 full-length films; and

11 WHEREAS, The Texas State Railroad and its historical park
12 have contributed greatly to the prosperity of the surrounding area;
13 in 2002 they injected nearly \$1.5 million into the local economy,
14 generated over \$4.6 million in sales, and produced a more than \$1.8
15 million impact on the income of local residents; and

16 WHEREAS, Deeply rooted in the life and industry of East
17 Texas, the Texas State Railroad is today one of the largest steam
18 train operations in the country; through its preservation program,
19 its excursion tours, and a wide variety of educational efforts, the
20 railroad constitutes an outstanding asset to the Lone Star State;
21 now, therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, That the 78th Legislature of the State of Texas
23 hereby designate the Texas State Railroad as the official State
24 Railroad of Texas.