

By: Eiland

H.C.R. No. 117

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, The history of Texas is not complete without
2 recognition of the ships, seaports, and maritime heritage that
3 contributed so greatly to the development, economy, immigration,
4 and culture of the state in the 19th century, and the state's
5 preeminent symbol of this thrilling bygone era is the tall ship
6 *Elissa*; and

7 WHEREAS, In the 1970s, the city of Galveston was looking for a
8 ship to complement the restoration and redevelopment of the Strand,
9 known in the 1800s as the Wall Street of the South, and to help
10 Texans recognize and interpret the state's maritime heritage; and

11 WHEREAS, Constructed in 1877 in Aberdeen, Scotland, *Elissa* is
12 a three-masted, iron-hulled tall ship of the "barque" type,
13 measuring 205 feet long and 99 feet, 9 inches high at the mainmast,
14 with a cargo capacity equivalent to that of eight railroad boxcars;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, *Elissa* transported a variety of goods around the
17 world over the course of her more than 90 years of commercial
18 history, first calling at Galveston in December 1883 with a cargo of
19 bananas and one passenger, then sailing for Liverpool, England,
20 with a cargo of cotton, and calling at Galveston again in September
21 1886 with a cargo of what was probably lumber or sugar and sailing
22 for Pensacola, Florida, in ballast; and

23 WHEREAS, Built at the dawn of the steamship era, *Elissa*
24 filled a niche in maritime commerce, calling on many ports, and she

1 was sold from owner to owner, sailing under different names before
2 being readied for the scrap yards of Piraeus, Greece, where she was
3 recognized by a maritime archeologist; and

4 WHEREAS, *Elissa* was acquired by the Galveston Historical
5 Foundation in 1975, and after some initial work in Greece, she was
6 towed in 1978 to the Royal Navy yard in Gibraltar; that same year,
7 *Elissa* was placed on the National Register of Historic Places,
8 becoming the first object to achieve this status while outside the
9 territorial limits of the United States; and

10 WHEREAS, In 1979, *Elissa* returned to Galveston, her former
11 port of call and new home, and intensive efforts began to raise
12 funding and restore her to her 1877 sailing configuration; that
13 goal achieved, *Elissa* sailed again on the Gulf of Mexico in
14 September 1982; and

15 WHEREAS, *Elissa* is preserved and maintained by her volunteer
16 crew, who donate thousands of hours annually and sail her at least
17 once a year to preserve the seamanship skills of square-rig
18 handling for future generations, providing guests with the rare
19 opportunity to sail on a historic vessel; and

20 WHEREAS, Restored to her former glory as a seaworthy sailing
21 ship, *Elissa* is an irreplaceable piece of living history, and her
22 stature is underscored by her designation as one of "America's
23 Treasures" by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and as a
24 National Historic Landmark; and

25 WHEREAS, *Elissa*, with the support of the Texas Seaport
26 Museum, provides students and the public with a rare opportunity to
27 visualize the maritime heritage and culture of Texas and its

1 coastal waters; and

2 WHEREAS, Even today, the sight of *Elissa* in full sail evokes
3 the color and excitement of the age of sailing ships, and this
4 vibrant reminder of an essential piece of our shared history,
5 representing Texas, is indeed deserving of special recognition;
6 now, therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, That the 79th Legislature of the State of Texas
8 hereby designate *Elissa* the official tall ship of Texas.