

By: Kolkhorst

H.C.R. No. 122

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, Industry, in northwest Austin County, enjoys the
2 distinction of being the oldest permanent German settlement in the
3 State of Texas; and

4 WHEREAS, The community dates to 1831 and owes its founding to
5 Johann Friedrich Ernst and his family, who emigrated from Oldenburg
6 to New York City in 1829; the Ernst family ran a boarding house in
7 New York for several years before deciding to relocate to Missouri
8 with a friend, Charles Fordtran; in the course of their move,
9 however, they read a prospectus about Stephen F. Austin's colony in
10 Texas and decided to make that their destination instead; and

11 WHEREAS, On April 16, 1831, Mr. Ernst was granted a league of
12 land on the west bank of the west fork of Mill Creek in Austin's
13 colony, 28 miles northwest of San Felipe; Friedrich Ernst, his
14 wife, and their children thus became the first German family to
15 settle in Texas; and

16 WHEREAS, Pleased with his new home, Mr. Ernst wrote a long
17 letter in February 1832 to a friend in Germany, extolling its
18 virtues; the letter was subsequently published in various Oldenburg
19 newspapers and inspired a number of other Germans to pack their bags
20 for Texas; and

21 WHEREAS, Friedrich Ernst gave a generous welcome to those who
22 found their way to his door, thereby earning the nickname "father of
23 the immigrants"; in addition to providing lodging in his home,
24 which served as a hotel and boarding house, he extended financial

1 assistance to fellow newcomers, some of whom settled nearby; in
2 1837 the young community received a post office, and the following
3 year Mr. Ernst formally laid out a town on his league; and

4 WHEREAS, The settlement took the name of Industry, possibly
5 because of the residents' reputation for hard work, or because of
6 the cigar-making enterprise that Mr. Ernst established there, using
7 tobacco that he grew; and

8 WHEREAS, Louis C. Ervendberg, who served as a pastor in
9 Industry and the surrounding area, and Dr. Joseph Anton Fischer
10 established the first school in Industry in 1840-1841; in 1842, 37
11 local residents petitioned the Texas Congress for the creation of
12 an educational institute, Hermann's University, and a charter was
13 granted for the school in 1844, though the project was never
14 realized; and

15 WHEREAS, From the 1850s to the 1890s, the area around
16 Industry was increasingly populated by Germans, Czechs, and African
17 Americans; the economy centered on farming and cotton production
18 until the mid-19th century, when ranching began to predominate; and

19 WHEREAS, Today, a library, a municipal park created on land
20 that once belonged to the Ernst family, and an active historical
21 society are among the focal points of community life; the town
22 supports several churches, among them a United Methodist
23 congregation whose building, erected in 1867, is a Recorded Texas
24 Historic Landmark; other historical markers are scattered
25 throughout the area, and historical accounts of Industry have been
26 collected in a published volume; and

27 WHEREAS, Industry enjoys an exceptional heritage and a place

1 of honor in the annals of our state, and it is fitting that its
2 position as the first German settlement in Texas be appropriately
3 honored; now, therefore, be it

4 RESOLVED, That the 79th Legislature of the State of Texas
5 hereby designate Industry as the Oldest German Settlement in the
6 Lone Star State.