

By: Farrar

H.R. No. 341

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The Descendants of Olivewood organization has done
2 an exemplary job of highlighting the rich history of Olivewood
3 Cemetery in Houston, and its efforts have helped the burial ground
4 to be recognized on the 2011 Most Endangered Places register kept by
5 Preservation Texas, which focuses on sites of significant interest
6 around the state; and

7 WHEREAS, First incorporated in 1875, Olivewood is one of the
8 oldest known platted cemeteries in Houston, and it served the
9 city's early African American community for a century; originally
10 laid out with 444 family plots containing more than 5,000 burial
11 spaces, it was expanded in 1917; and

12 WHEREAS, The cemetery was the final resting place for former
13 slaves, laborers, military veterans, and pivotal leaders of
14 Houston's post-Emancipation African American population; among
15 those buried there are the first black ordained Methodist minister
16 in the United States, the Reverend Elias Dibble of Trinity
17 Methodist Episcopal Church, as well as businessman James B. Bell,
18 educator James D. Ryan, physician Russell F. Ferrill, and dentist
19 Milton A. Baker; and

20 WHEREAS, The burial ground also features examples of
21 pre-Emancipation interment practices, such as upright pipes
22 symbolizing the path between the worlds of the living and the dead,
23 seashells as grave ornaments, and text with upside-down or
24 backwards letters as used in some African cultures to signify

1 death; and

2 WHEREAS, Founded in 2003, the Descendants of Olivewood is a
3 nonprofit organization dedicated to the reclamation of the cemetery
4 for the benefit of current and future generations of Houston
5 residents; the group maintains committees focused on restoration,
6 history, public relations, fund-raising, security, and engineering
7 issues, and it succeeded in obtaining a Texas Historical Marker for
8 the cemetery in 2009 in addition to the cemetery's inclusion on the
9 2011 Most Endangered Places list; and

10 WHEREAS, This historic site provides a valuable link to
11 crucial chapters of Houston history, and the Descendants of
12 Olivewood are doing important work to ensure that the legacy of
13 their ancestors is not forgotten; now, therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas
15 Legislature hereby honor the Descendants of Olivewood for their
16 efforts to preserve the historic Olivewood Cemetery in Houston and
17 extend to the members of that organization sincere best wishes for
18 continued success in their worthy endeavor; and, be it further

19 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
20 prepared for the Descendants of Olivewood as an expression of high
21 regard by the Texas House of Representatives.