

By: Rodríguez

S.C.R. No. 33

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, On September 8, 1849, Major Jefferson Van Horne and a contingent of United States Army troops arrived in the vicinity of present-day El Paso to establish a post on the Rio Grande, the first American military encampment in an area that has hosted United States armed forces now for more than a century and a half; and

WHEREAS, A native of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Jefferson Van Horne was born to Dorothy Johns Marple Van Horne and General Isaac Van Horne, a veteran of the American Revolution; following the family tradition of military service, he graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1827 and upheld its motto of "Duty, Honor, Country" throughout his life; and

WHEREAS, His early assignments included frontier duty at Jefferson Barracks in Missouri and a tour at Fort Smith, Arkansas; from 1846 to 1848, he served his country in the Mexican War, and his distinguished efforts earned him promotion to the rank of major; and

WHEREAS, While on leave in his hometown of Zanesville, Ohio, Jefferson Van Horne met Mary Gilbert, and after exchanging romantic letters for two years, the couple were married on November 28, 1850; they had one son, Lewis Cass Van Horne; and

WHEREAS, In May 1849, Major Van Horne was instructed to establish a military post on the north bank of the Rio Grande, opposite what is now Ciudad Juarez, for the purpose of protecting

1 both settlers in the area and travelers bound for California from  
2 Indian attack; he departed Camp Salado, on the outskirts of San  
3 Antonio, on June 1, commanding regimental staff, six companies of  
4 the Third Infantry, and a howitzer battery; his party of nearly 260  
5 soldiers was accompanied by some 100 civilians who played a  
6 supporting role; and

7         WHEREAS, With 275 wagons, the expedition represented the  
8 longest wagon train to embark westward across Texas; after 100 days  
9 and a 643-mile overland march, Major Van Horne and his men reached  
10 their destination on September 8, 1849; Major Van Horne  
11 subsequently quartered four companies at Coon's Rancho, where  
12 downtown El Paso now stands, and sent two companies to garrison the  
13 old Spanish presidio at San Elizario, 20 miles to the southeast; and

14         WHEREAS, In September 1851, the War Department closed both  
15 the post at Coon's Rancho and the presidio and ordered Major Van  
16 Horne and most of his troops to Fort Fillmore, 40 miles north of El  
17 Paso, near Mesilla, New Mexico; Major Van Horne had recruiting duty  
18 from 1852 to 1854, and between 1855 and 1857 he served at Fort  
19 Stanton, New Mexico, and at the Post of Albuquerque; he died in  
20 Albuquerque on September 26, 1857; and

21         WHEREAS, A new army post was established on the site of  
22 present-day El Paso in January 1854, and in March of that year it  
23 was named Fort Bliss after Lieutenant Colonel William Bliss, a  
24 career army officer and an accomplished scholar who was also the  
25 son-in-law of President Zachary Taylor; the fort acquired a  
26 permanent location in El Paso in 1893; and

27         WHEREAS, The post that Major Jefferson Van Horne established

1 at the site of present-day El Paso served to protect a vital route  
2 for a dynamic and burgeoning nation pushing westward and marked the  
3 beginning of a long and close association between the United States  
4 military and the people of El Paso, and it is indeed fitting that  
5 the anniversary of his arrival at the Pass of the North be  
6 commemorated; now, therefore, be it

7         RESOLVED, That the 84th Legislature of the State of Texas  
8 hereby designate September 8 as Major Jefferson Van Horne Day in the  
9 State of Texas; and, be it further

10         RESOLVED, That, in accordance with the provisions of Section  
11 [391.004](#)(d), Government Code, this designation remain in effect  
12 until the 10th anniversary of the date this resolution is finally  
13 passed by the legislature.