

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2005

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 1171

Sponsors: Senator Snow.

April 28, 2005

A JOINT RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF WILLIAM HOLLAND THOMAS, FORMER MEMBER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ON THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH.

Whereas, William Holland Thomas was born on February 5, 1805, in Haywood County; and

Whereas, William Holland Thomas was the son of Richard Thomas, a Revolutionary War veteran, who died before he was born, and Temperance Calvert Thomas; and

Whereas, as a young boy, William Holland Thomas befriended members of the local Oconaluftee Indians or Qualla Clan, which later became the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; and

Whereas, as a teenager, William Holland Thomas began working at a local trading post near his home, during which time he learned the Cherokee language and customs; and

Whereas, William Holland Thomas developed a mutual friendship with Chief Yonaguska and was later adopted by the Chief as a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; and

Whereas, at the age of 15, William Holland Thomas became an attorney after studying from a set of law books that was given to him while he was working at the trading post; and

Whereas, as an adult, William Holland Thomas was an influential man in his community and the Western portion of the State; and

Whereas, in addition to practicing law, William Holland Thomas was also a businessman, building stores, turnpikes, and railroads; and

Whereas, during the 1830s, William Holland Thomas served as an agent for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, traveling to Washington, DC, to persuade the federal government to allow them to remain in North Carolina and to defend their claims for financial payments promised them; and

Whereas, William Holland Thomas was successful in helping the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians win the right to be treated as citizens of North Carolina, to govern themselves in their own communities, and to become landowners; and

Whereas, upon the death of Chief Yonaguska in 1839, William Holland Thomas was named Chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, a title he held for 28 years; and

Whereas, prior to his death, William Holland Thomas recounted his life with the Cherokees to a Smithsonian Institute ethnologist, James Mooney, which greatly contributed to the preservation of the history and culture of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; and

Whereas, William Holland Thomas served as a State senator from 1848 to 1861; and

Whereas, during the Civil War, William Holland Thomas served as Colonel of a unit known as Thomas' Legion, which consisted of several regiments, including two composed of Cherokee Indians; and

Whereas, William Holland Thomas was married to Sarah Love and together they had three children, William H. Thomas, Jr., James Robert Thomas, and Sallie Love Thomas; and

Whereas, after a number of years of declining health and hospital confinement, William Holland Thomas died on May 10, 1893; and

Whereas, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of William Holland Thomas, the Cashiers Historical Society will hold a symposium, entitled "The Life and Times of William Holland Thomas" on May 5, 6, and 7, 2005;

Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

SECTION 1. The General Assembly honors the life and memory of William Holland Thomas and acknowledges his service to the State and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

SECTION 2. The General Assembly encourages the citizens of this State to join the Cashiers Historical Society in celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of William Holland Thomas.

SECTION 3. The Secretary of State shall transmit a certified copy of this resolution to the Cashiers Historical Society.

SECTION 4. This resolution is effective upon ratification.