

105TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 240

Expressing the sense of the Congress that postage stamps should be issued by the United States to honor and recognize the first permanent settlement of the western United States by the Spanish explorer Don Juan de Onate.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 11, 1998

Mr. REYES submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress that postage stamps should be issued by the United States to honor and recognize the first permanent settlement of the western United States by the Spanish explorer Don Juan de Onate.

Whereas Don Juan de Onate, the Spanish explorer who was the son of a noble Spanish family and the husband of the granddaughter of Cortez and the great-granddaughter of Montezuma, led the first major colonizing effort into what is now the United States;

Whereas Don Juan de Onate began in January of 1598, with approximately 600 Spanish colonists and Franciscan priests from Santa Barbara, Mexico, a four-month expe-

dition through the Chihuahuan desert to the Rio Grande and to the city currently known as El Paso, Texas;

Whereas these colonists packed all of their possessions into 83 ox-drawn, wooden-wheeled wagons, and traveled with nearly 8,000 horses, oxen, sheep, goats, and cattle, to form a four-mile-long procession through the desert;

Whereas this herd of livestock introduced the major source of horses that spread throughout the United States and contributed to the development of agriculture and commerce;

Whereas the expedition of Don Juan de Onate was the largest colonizing expedition into what is now the United States, and was the start of colonization in the Southwest;

Whereas Don Juan de Onate carved a new path from Mexico to the banks of the Rio Grande River in El Paso, Texas, and continued to Sante Fe, New Mexico, establishing the royal Spanish Road “El Camino Real”;

Whereas “El Camino Real”, which was the longest highway in the Americas for several hundred years, became a major trade route and opened the West to European colonization;

Whereas Don Juan de Onate and the Spanish colonists traveled along this route between the Rocky Mountain Range and the Sierra Mountain Range, discovering the “El Paso del Norte” (the “Pass of the North”), which was the origin of the name El Paso, Texas;

Whereas Don Juan de Onate and the colonists traveled hundreds of miles through desert and mountains for more than four months, suffering numerous hardships throughout their journey;

Whereas the weary colonists ultimately arrived at the banks of the Rio Grande on April 20, 1598, where they found plentiful water, fish, and game;

Whereas in celebration of having survived the expedition, arriving at the Rio Grande, and discovering its bountiful river valley, Don Juan de Onate called for a day of feast and religious ceremony;

Whereas Don Juan de Onate and the colonists requested the local inhabitants to join in celebration and, on April 30, 1598, the colonists gathered for the first Thanksgiving;

Whereas during this festivity Don Juan de Onate claimed the territory watered by the Rio Grande as Spanish territory, and the colonists ate, drank, and offered their gratitude for reaching the river and for the bounty of the land they had discovered;

Whereas this feast is considered to be the first American Thanksgiving, occurring 22 years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts;

Whereas the issuance of stamps recognizing this event will broaden the historical understanding of the origins and development of the United States and further serve to increase awareness of the influence of Spanish language and culture on our country;

Whereas on April 24, 1998, a Quadricentennial Festival and Gala will take place in El Paso, Texas, to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Don Juan de Onate's Camino Real expedition and the first Thanksgiving; and

Whereas postage stamps have been commissioned to honor other significant elements of American culture and history: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress that—*

3 (1) postage stamps should be issued by the
4 United States in honor and recognition of the first
5 permanent settlement of the western United States
6 by the Spanish explorer Don Juan de Onate, includ-
7 ing—

8 (A) a postage stamp depicting Don Juan
9 de Onate, who led the expedition of the first
10 colonists of the western United States and
11 gathered those colonists and native inhabitants
12 for the first Thanksgiving; and

13 (B) a postage stamp depicting El Camino
14 Real, the path carved by Don Juan de Onate
15 which begins in Mexico City, enters the United
16 States through El Paso, Texas, and extends to
17 Santa Fe, New Mexico; and

18 (2) the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee of
19 the United States Postal Service should recommend
20 to the Postmaster General that these postage stamps
21 be issued.

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