

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

CITY OF VON ORMY

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Press Release

February 11, 2011

RE: Texas House of Representatives to Honor Blas Herrera, Founder of Von Ormy, and the man who saved San Antonio.

State Rep. John V. Garza and the Texas House of Representatives will honor the founder of Von Ormy, Texas, Blas María Herrera in a ceremony to be held on Tuesday, February 22nd, 2011 at the Texas State Capitol. Herrera was a courier, soldier and scout, often called the "Paul Revere" of the Texas Revolution because of his famous ride on from the Rio Grande to San Antonio to warn of the approach of Santa Anna. Herrera arrived in San Antonio on February 22, 1836. Later in 1836, Herrera was sent by Juan Seguin to President Sam Houston to argue against an order to burn and evacuate San Antonio. He was successful and San Antonio was saved from destruction. Later in life, Herrera served as a Texas Ranger, Justice of the Peace and civic leader in southwest Bexar County. He was the original settler of what became Von Ormy, Texas. February 22, 2011 will be designated "Blas Herrera Day" in Texas. The proclamation was co-written by State Historian, Dr. Jesus de la Teja of Texas State University.

The day's events will also include a reception at the Bob Bullock Museum, where visitors will hear a historic presentation of the life of Blas Maria Herrera by Von Ormy Mayor Art Martinez de Vara. City of San Antonio Archeologist Kay Hindes will present the story of the discovery of the Herrera Gates in Von Ormy which are believed to be the gates from one of the San Antonio Missions, most likely the Alamo. They were donated to the state by descendent Adolph Herrera and are now on permanent display at the Bob Bullock Texas History Museum in Austin. The events at the Bob Bullock Museum are sponsored by Los Bexarenos Genealogical Society. Los Bexareños is an organization dedicated to Hispanic history and ancestral research, particularly "Bexareños" who were the early inhabitants of San Antonio de Bexar. The Society promotes public interest in history and genealogy through outreach and educational programs.

More About Blas Maria Herrera:

During the siege of Bexar in late 1835, Herrera served under the command of Capt. Juan Nepomuceno Seguín and was a member of the assaulting force on December 5-9, 1835. Early in 1836 Seguín sent him to the Rio Grande to keep surveillance on Mexican troop movements and to report any advance on San Antonio. Seeing Santa Ana's Army assemble, he raced back to San Antonio with fellow spy Trinidad Coy and on February 22, brought the information that Mexican general Antonio López de Santa Anna's troops were approaching the city. It is this famous ride which earned him the title the "Paul Revere of the Alamo".

Herrera escaped death at the Alamo because he was assigned to escort and protect José Antonio Navarro and José Francisco Ruiz during their trip to Washington-on-the-Brazos, where they signed the Texas Declaration of Independence on March 2, 1836.

Family tradition holds that Blas Herrera, because of his great knowledge of the countryside, was selected to serve Gen. Sam Houston in intelligence assignments before and during the battle of San Jacinto. A testimony to the delicate and dangerous missions he undertook in the cause of Texas independence is found in a letter written to him from Columbia on December 27, 1836, by his father-in-law, José Francisco Ruiz, who expressed his concern for Herrera's safety should the Mexican troops return.

In late 1836, when Gen. Felix Huston ordered the burning and evacuation of San Antonio fearing the return of the Mexican Army, Seguín sent Herrera to President Sam Houston to plead the case for San Antonio. He was successful and the city was spared. After his military services during the revolution, Herrera settled on his ranch on the Medina where he worked as a farmer and rancher.

He served as a Texas Ranger in the 1839 campaign against the Comanche, after a raid on San Antonio and the Herrera ranch. After the Republic he became a civic leader in Southwest Bexar County.

His ranch saw the first Catholic Church (1840), ferry (1846), post office (1868) and public school (1872). The community developed into present-day Von Ormy, Texas.

He served as a Justice of the Peace. His ranch house was the election site for the area for nearly 50 years. His sons served in the Civil War and one returned wounded and became the first school master of the area. Herrera died on July 9, 1878 and was buried in Von Ormy next to his brother-in-law Francisco A. Ruiz in the historic Ruiz-Herrera Cemetery in Von Ormy.

His great-grandson was John J. Herrera the pioneering LULAC civil rights attorney who argued *Hernandez v. State of Texas* along with Gus Garcia, and later became national LULAC president.

In the 1980's the Herrera Gates were located on the Herrera Ranch and identified as belonging to one of the San Antonio Missions, most likely those of Mission San Antonio de Valero ("the Alamo"). The gates are now on permanent display in the Bob Bullock Museum

The official invitation to the events can be seen here:

http://www.ci.sat.tx.us/historic/Docs/Events/Blas_Herrera_Day.pdf

About Von Ormy:

Von Ormy is located in Southwest Bexar County and is the newest City in Bexar County, being incorporated in 2008. It was founded in 1827 by Blas Maria Herrera. Von Ormy has 1300 residents and is 2 square miles and lies along I-35 between Loop 410 and Loop 1604 in southwest Bexar County.

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