

SR-88, As Adopted by Senate, October 19, 2011

Senators Richardville, Bieda, Young and Kowall offered the following resolution:

Senate Resolution No. 88.

A resolution of tribute for the Honorable Stevens Thomson Mason.

Whereas, Stevens Thomson Mason was born on October 27, 1811, in Loudoun County, Virginia, moving with his family to Detroit, Michigan, in 1830. In 1831, at the age of nineteen, he was appointed Secretary of Michigan Territory by President Andrew Jackson. Despite his youth, he frequently served as Acting Governor in the absence of Territorial Governor George Porter; and

Whereas, As Acting Governor, Mason served with distinction and tireless energy. President Jackson called him “Young Hotspur” in honor of his fiery spirit--preparing Michigan for statehood, calling for a constitutional convention to create a state government in 1835. On November 1, 1835, in recognition of his great popularity and able leadership, Mason was elected the first Governor of Michigan in a landslide victory. Barely twenty-four years old at the time, he remains to this day the youngest person ever elected to the office of state Governor in the history of the nation; and

Whereas, He guided Michigan through the border dispute with Ohio, known as the Toledo War, and was successful in convincing Michigan to relinquish its claim to the so-called Toledo Strip in return for the western Upper Peninsula, thus paving the way for Michigan's admission to the Union as the 26th state on January 26, 1837; and

Whereas, Mason, re-elected in 1837 to another two-year term as Governor, devoted his energies to developing the institutions of the new state, particularly those involving education. He championed free public education and promoted the development of the University of Michigan, which he predicted would become one of the finest institutions of higher learning in the nation. He also sought to develop Michigan's natural resources, appointing Douglass Houghton as the first state geologist and setting in motion the discovery of the Upper Peninsula's vast copper and iron reserves. He called for extensive internal improvements, including the construction of roads, railroads, and a ship canal at Sault Ste. Marie; and

Whereas, Stevens Thomson Mason, visionary first Governor of Michigan, died unexpectedly and prematurely of pneumonia in New York City on January 4, 1843, at the age of thirty-one. On June 4, 1905, sixty-two years after his death, Mason's remains were disinterred from Marble Cemetery in New York City and reinterred with great ceremony in Capitol Park in Detroit, at the location of Michigan's first State Capitol. In 1908, a bronze life-sized statue of the first Governor was raised over his grave. Finally, on July 1, 2010, Mason's remains were disinterred once more to allow for the redevelopment of Capitol Park. After lying in state in the rotunda of the Michigan State Capitol on October 26, 2010, Mason was reinterred for a final time in Capitol Park in Detroit; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we offer this resolution of tribute in honor of Stevens Thomson Mason, first Governor of Michigan, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of his birth, October 27, 1811; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Michigan Historical Commission as a token of our high esteem.