

Spettel Riverside House recognized as one of “Texas Most Endangered Places”

The Medina Lake Preservation Society (MLPS) is proud to announce that on March 22nd, at 10:30 AM on the steps on the Texas State Capitol building the Spettel Riverside House was recognized as one of “Texas Most Endangered Places” by Preservation Texas (PT). The award brings to light the immediate need to preserve this rare piece of local Texas history. Each year, PT receives 100’s of nominations for the award and the selection process criteria include historical significance and current threat of destruction.

MLPS President Gloria Villela Muniz, Executive Director Carol L. Smith and Committee Chair Roberto Pachecano attended the PT Summit along with Bandera County Historical Commission Chair Roy Dugosh and Co-Chair Elenora Goodley.

“We are very proud of the recognition for the Spettel Riverside House” said Smith, “and are pleased to be working with Equity Lifestyles to preserve this important piece of Texas history. The assistance of Preservation Texas and Stuart Johnson, of the San Antonio Conservation Society were invaluable in our nomination. Both of these groups have pledged to continue to mentor us through the process of preservation.”



Bandera Cattle Company gunfighters Tommy Knotts, Chuck Monsen and Dan Caldwell showed up in full cowboy regalia and were a big hit in front of the State Capitol. “We feel naked,” quipped Caldwell, “the DPS wouldn’t let us wear our guns!”

To begin the preservation process, the home must be stabilized to prevent further deterioration and the full restoration is the long term goal for the MLPS. Fundraising to accomplish this goal has already begun.

The Spettel Riverside House is currently located at 215 Spettel Road on the Thousand Trails Resort property owned by Equity Lifestyles of Chicago, Illinois. The home was originally located near what was alternately called Cattlemen’s, Ten Mile or Mitchell’s Crossing on the Medina River approximately 10 miles from Bandera. Although the exact date of its construction is not known, it is estimated that it was built somewhere between 1874 and 1881. It was a very popular stop along the southern cattle drive routes from south Texas, Castroville and into Bandera along the Western Cattle Trail, a branch of the Chisholm Trail. Not only was the Riverside House a welcome rest stop for the drovers, there were large holding pens for the cattle so most of the time, all the cowboys got to rest for the night. Over 10 and 12 million cattle were driven north from Texas into Dodge City. It can be said that the Spettel is a house that cattle built.

As the Medina Dam was being built in 1911-12, the Spettel House was threatened with inundation. Mrs. Spettel contracted for the home to be moved up out of the riverbed to its current location. The home was cut into two pieces, the first section being hauled by mule train taking almost one month. As the waters of Medina Lake began rising, it became apparent that a more timely method of moving the second section was needed and a steam engine from Comfort was utilized.

The home and property was purchased by the Projects American Corporation in the late 1970's and restored in 1980. Since that time, minimal maintenance has caused the house to deteriorate to an unacceptable state. The MLPS learned that the current owner was considering its demolition and rushed to its rescue. It has received a stay of demolition and Equity Lifestyles and the MLPS will try to come to a working resolution to try and save this important portion of Texas history.

For more information call the MLPS at (210) 400-0331 or visit their website at www.medinalakepreservation.org