

Summer & Fall Events Hosted by Heritage Association of San Marcos

By Renee Graham & Cathy Dillon

Part 1 of 5 Part Series:

Varamendi Park Picnic



A festive public picnic under the ancient trees on Saturday, June 26th will mark the official reopening of historic Veramendi Plaza. This Heritage Association event is the first in a series of five, scheduled for the 4th Saturday in each month June through October.

With its trademark southern hospitality on pandemic hold since March of 2020, Heritage members are anxious to get back to work! For over 45 years this group has been dedicated to preserving the history, architecture, natural beauty and charm of San Marcos....and we hope many more people will join this fun and passionately committed group. Community preservation efforts now will mean so much to future generations.

Though Heritage can't yet restart its famous Friday fundraising luncheons in the Cottage Kitchen, baby steps in that direction will take the form of these outdoor events in the park. We hope everyone will come support Heritage and even consider joining! Bring your lawn chairs and coolers. Listen to live music by Tracy Weinberg and Gretchen McMahon. Watch artists demonstrate their crafts: Charley Pritchard-Potter, Peggy Jones-hat maker, and Marti Swanson-wet felting. Tour the restored Merriman Cabin circa 1847 and buy box lunches from the Cottage Kitchen to enjoy under the shade trees.

One of the most scenic parks in San Marcos, historic Juan Veramendi Plaza contains several facilities including the iconic gazebo, the Charles S. Cock House Museum, the Dr. Eli T. Merriman Cabin Museum, the Dr. Gwen K. Smith Fountain, the Memorial Grove and the beautiful pathway, the "Riverwalk". The land and buildings all belong to the city, but the original inspirations and restorations, plus 46 years of ongoing financial stewardship, have always been functions of Heritage, the Heritage Guild and the Heritage Riverwalk Park committee.

San Marcos is located on land that was once part of a Spanish land grant to Colonial governor Juan Martin de Veramendi in 1832. His "two League" grant included land on both sides of the River. The plaza that bears his name today was a part of that original grant. In 1970, the Urban Renewal Agency of the City of San Marcos purchased this property and began, with the Hays County Historical Survey Committee, a search into its past and its connections to the rich cultural heritage of San Marcos. This resulted in naming the land after Veramendi, one of the area's most illustrious early citizens.

Within the plaza sits the quaint, historic Charles S. Cock House. This was the 1850's home of San Marcos' second mayor, and is now known to many as the Cottage Kitchen. It's the perfect spot to host small gatherings when you want the use of a full kitchen, bathroom facilities, air conditioning, access to lovely landscaped grounds, and a full front porch for stretching your legs. It has a capacity of 45 people—and best of all, it's NOT in your house! The second best part is the reasonable rate. Have your next birthday, shower, reception and celebrations at The Cottage Kitchen. Keep life simple. Book through Marianne Moore 512-665-6048.

Behind the Cock House is the even older Merriman Cabin. It was built in 1846 by Dr. Eli T. Merriman (1815-1867), a Yale graduate and 1838 Texas settler. Merriman was one of three San Marcos town site owners and the first physician in the area. When Dr. Merriman built his one pen long home close to the San Marcos River, he had no idea it would be moved twice in the next 150 years...or that it would ever be worthy of medallion recognition from the Texas State Historical Commission. It is the second oldest home in San Marcos, located originally near the town square, built of hand-hewn timber and furnished in a manner appropriate to the period. Arrange historic tours by calling Marnie Silcocks at 512-968-0060....or just come to the picnic and be among the first to see the results of its recent restoration.

Membership to the Heritage Association of San Marcos can be made online. Visit www.HeritageSanMarcos.org and click JOIN. Financial support through membership and donations keep our collective fervor going. Our website shares photos, events, history and many stories about the vision that has driven Heritage since its founding in 1975.

Without the Heritage Association's visionary founders, there is little doubt that today's San Marcos would not have its current charm. Among the fastest growing cities in America, this town is a living monument to the beauty handed down to us by our ancestors. With one of the largest intact historic residential districts in the state, a colorful vintage downtown, and a fiercely protected sparkling river, we can be proud that this town has a heart like none other. Come to the picnic and let's all enjoy being together again!