Steve Radack, Commissioner
Harris County Precinct 3
Cypress Top Historic Park
May 2020

Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff advise everyone to stay mindful and exercise care to avoid the spread of COVID-19. Stay safe and stay healthy.

Group tours and activities at Cypress Top are temporarily suspended. Call 281-357-5324 or visit www.pct3.com for information and updates to the park calendar.

Although this is a trying and worrisome time with all the uncertainty posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Cypress has experienced life-altering diseases many times before. Yellow fever swept through Cypress multiple times in a matter of decades, forever shaping the course of the community. The Colorado Citizen in Columbus, Texas reported on October 13, 1859, “…out of fifty-four persons residing in Cypress City, on the railroad, thirty-three, including the doctor, were down sick with the yellow fever. They sent to the Howard Association in Houston for aid… Three deaths are reported. The place is in deplorable condition.” The trains played a major role in Cypress, but they also aided in the transport of infected mosquitoes throughout Texas. The mosquitoes got into the passenger and freight cars in Galveston and Houston. From there, they went where the trains stopped, infecting the towns wherever they went. The 1860 US Census mortality report for Cypress reported that of the original 55 inhabitants, 27 of them died in the 1859 Yellow Fever epidemic. The disease came upon the town again less than a decade later in 1867. Prior to these epidemics, Cypress was a mixture of English, French, German, and Irish descent. After the fever swept through the town, the remaining survivors were mostly of German heritage. This strong German presence continued for 30 years following the 1867 epidemic.

The March Cypress Top bus trip visited East Texas to learn about two of the most important industries in that area – logging and the railroad. First stopping at The History Center of Diboll, followed by The Forestry Museum in Lufkin, these two sites focus on their local history. However, visiting them both in the same day highlights the overlap and similarities between these two cities and how heavily they relied on the same industries. Only about 20 minutes away from each other, it is highly recommended to make the trip there and learn more about East Texas. The History Center houses an extensive historical collection and archive, and the Texas Forestry Museum is fun for the whole family with lots of entertaining hands-on activities.
Stepping through the doors of The History Center, the scent of pine permeates through the building. This makes sense when learning the entire building is made from native pine and cypress trees. It proves to be a proper introduction to learning the history of Diboll and its connection to the lumber industry. The Temple Family have been key members of the Diboll community. In fact, the city was founded by T.L.L. Temple in the 1890s. Since there was already a city named Temple, Diboll was chosen instead, named after the previous owner of the land. T.L.L. established the Southern Pine Lumber Company back in 1893, later to become Temple Industries. With lumber being the main commodity of the community’s economy, trains proved the crucial means of transport for such large materials. Thus, Temple Lumber and the railroad cemented their connection to the community. The site also houses an extensive archival collection, full of a variety of items documenting Diboll’s history through physical artifacts as well as oral history recordings.
Throughout the museum, exhibits discuss everyday life for the citizens of the area. For example, one exhibit traced the advancement in schooling for African Americans in Diboll from one-room schoolhouses in the 19th century all the way through desegregation and the Civil Rights Movement. Another exhibit details the migrant logging camps. These were made up of multiple families who would stay in a place until the work was done. Then they simply moved their small homes onto the railroad cars and continued down the line to the next job. Some of these migrant workers decided to stay and put down roots in Diboll, and shared their stories with The History Center.

In the museum’s courtyard area sits the Outdoor Railroad Exhibit. It featured the 68-ton ten-wheeler steam engine “Lucky” 13, a 40-foot-long log car, and a bright green Texas Southeastern Railroad caboose. A friendly and knowledgeable docent provided a detailed account of the museum’s struggle to acquire these pieces of history and move them onto the property. As the tour ended, Seniors enjoyed the experience of pulling the cord to hear the train whistle blow.

Just a short drive away from Diboll is the Texas Forestry Museum in Lufkin. While the two museums share a similar history tied to lumber and the railroad, their goals are very different. Diboll focused on preservation and research. The Texas Forestry Museum’s goal is to make learning about their history fun for people of all ages. Moreover, it clearly showed during the visit. While the Seniors greatly enjoyed their tour, various families also toured the museum and enjoyed themselves just as much as the Seniors did. Full of color and an eclectic assortment of items, there was no shortage of things to observe and learn about.
Lufkin prided itself on being a sawmill town. It played a major role in the city’s economy and provided a wide variety of jobs. They needed sawyers to cut down the trees, edgers to cut off excess branches, trimmers to cut the tree to exact lengths, graders to determine the quality of the lumber, and planers to finish the boards. The lumber industry was not as heavily segregated as other industries, and African Americans could often find work in these jobs. The sawmill created opportunity for other professions as well. Blacksmiths (and later machinists) were needed to fix the various tools and equipment required by the lumber workers. Many of these workers faced great danger in their day-to-day jobs. Thus, the companies often hired their own doctors to work only for them. Not only did they tend to the company employees, but the wives and children of these workers as well. Women primarily worked as secretaries and clerks on the administrative end. In summary, the sawmill not only created plenty of jobs, it gave opportunities to a diverse group within the community.

As materials like plastic became more popular, sawmills all over the country tried to expand into other markets. In one exhibit room, a toilet seat and dress are on display in the corner of the room. As the guide explained, these items, pictured below, are actually made out of paper. In the early 1960s, paper clothes were a trendy fashion item. Things like pantsuits and bridal gowns were made out of paper. The trend died as quickly as it began, and production of the clothing ended in 1968. The toilet seat created by Temple Industries in Pineland, Texas is a unique piece made using wood flour and thermosetting resin. The product did not take off and was eventually taken off the market.
The sawmill continued to be a pillar of the community for decades. It remained in business until 2003. Its closure had a major impact on Lufkin. Former workers still gather at a local restaurant and reminisce about working there. A picture of the group hangs on the wall of one of the exhibit rooms. Once again, as the tour ended, Seniors enjoyed the experience of pulling the cord and hearing the train whistle blow in the outdoor section of the museum.

Signing Up for Senior History Bus Trips (Must be at least 50 years old to go on these trips)

We will continue to take reservations for bus trips. Registrants will be notified of any changes or cancellations.

You may currently sign up for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 19</td>
<td>The Black Cowboy Museum in Rosenberg and a site in Richmond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 24</td>
<td>The Houston Museum of Fine Arts - Rienzi House European Decorative Art and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Museum of Southern History, Morris Cultural Arts Center at Houston Baptist University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign up for future trips by emailing cypresstop@pct3.hctx.net or calling (281) 357-5324. You may only sign up yourself plus one friend/spouse. No multiple reservations. You will get a confirmation e-mail a week before the trip if you have a seat.

Cypress Top Historic Park is open seven days a week from 7:00 a.m. to dusk. The buildings are open Tuesdays through Thursdays from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Formal tours of the museum complex led by CHS volunteers begin from Juergen’s Store at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. each Tuesday. However, our staff and volunteers are happy to have you visit the store anytime while we are there to give you an impromptu tour of any of the buildings. **Group (6 or more) tours may be booked Tuesdays through Saturdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.** Group tours are subject to staff availability, so we recommend you make reservations at least one month in advance. The park and museum buildings are open to all and, as with all events offered at Cypress Top Historic Park, **admissions and tours are free.**

**Juergen’s Hall is a community center,** offering many activities and classes for all ages. Please check the Precinct Three website at [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com) for hours of operation and offerings of Juergen’s Hall Community Center.

Members of the **Cypress Historical Society** are in the Cypress Train Depot (bright yellow building) at Cypress Top Historic Park every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and on the third Saturday of the month from noon to 3 p.m. They have a great deal of genealogy information on most early Cypress area families. Drop in and visit them when you are in the area. The May and June calendars can be found on the Precinct Three website under activity calendars. Select from the drop down menu. [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com).