Commissioner Steve Radack wishes you a Happy Halloween. Even though it is not an official holiday, it has been embraced by the U.S.A. for more than 100 years. It has become a “holiday” with profound economic impact. This year it has been predicted that we will spend over nine billion dollars celebrating the day. The celebration was started by the church to modify and co-opt the pagan autumn festivals and mesh them with the Christian All Saints Festival. However, it has been the merchants who seem to have co-opted it most successfully. Trick or Treat.

Octobers past have seen many significant historical events that had profound economic impacts on America. In 1492, Columbus landed on American shores and ushered in an economic transformation for both American Continents. In 1781, the British surrendered to George Washington at Yorktown, essentially ending British control of American Colonies which unleashed an expansive capitalist nation. In 1825, the Erie Canal opened as the first major man-made waterway in America, drastically changing transportation costs. In 1861, the first transcontinental telegram in America was sent from San Francisco to Washington. This type of communication allowed business transactions to truly become national and immediate. In 1879, Thomas Edison successfully tested an electric incandescent lamp with a carbonized filament at his laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey. This invention transformed America, as did Henry Ford in October 1908 when he offered for sale his Model T. In 1927, the first “talkie” opened in New York. The Jazz Singer starring Al Jolson was the first full-length feature film using spoken dialogue. This novel film led to a major leap in the movie industry.

In 1939, Albert Einstein warned President Franklin D. Roosevelt that his theories could lead to Nazi Germany's development of an atomic bomb. Einstein suggested the U.S. develop its own bomb, which resulted in the top secret “Manhattan Project.” This led to the nuclear age, which has had a profound economic impact on America and the world. Finally in 1957, the Space Age began when the Russians launched the first satellite into orbit, Sputnik I. This tiny satellite transmitted a beeping radio signal for 21 days. It was played on local radio stations to the anxiety of us all. The Cold War Space Race was on and America developed capabilities to send men into space, eventually landing on the moon. The American economy eventually won the Cold War.

So while October has had Black Tuesday, Black Thursday and other horrible economic catastrophes, it has had more than its share of triumphs so that these black days were merely “just another day.” America’s future is bright. Maybe the next big historic innovation will happen this October.

Cypress Top Historic Park
The museum buildings at Cypress Top Historic Park are now open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, from 8am – 4pm. Stop in the store to request a tour on any of those days. Our new, blue OPEN sign is already paying dividends, as
visitors are now stopping and commenting that their visit was prompted by our new sign. As always, park grounds are open seven days a week, dawn to dusk.

September 19 was a beautiful day to paint at Cypress Top and a group from Cypress Creek Christian Church took advantage of the day to not only tour the site but also do a little water color painting. They enjoyed the stories presented in the store by our Cypress Historical Society volunteer which brought the artifacts to life. The group was intrigued by how well merchandise on the shelves lent themselves as subjects for still life as well. As with other tours, these folks were excited to have a Juergen family descendant on hand to guide them through the house. They spent the remainder of their afternoon outside, *en plein air*, as painters and artists are wont to do.

The September History Bus Trip went to Bastrop. This city has been judged the most historic town in Texas due in a large part to the fact that it has 100 structures listed on the National Historic register. Reaching Bastrop in record time, we were able to make an unscheduled stop at a local art gallery. This gallery features many local artists, including a sculptor who casts life-size bronzes which delighted our seniors. The moose sculpture provided many with imaginative photos for their personal social media pages. The tortoise sculpture might be the group’s mascot: step by step, they do go a long way in search of history and fun.

Behind the gallery, in an area that will include future exhibits in a park setting, was a large antique steam engine. It is from a local mill and was rescued and restored by a Bastrop resident. It is a beautiful and unique engine. It attracted the attention of Jay Leno, who is well known for collecting steam engines as well as cars. He kept pestering the owner of the steam engine, telling him that he had enough money to buy it. After about the fourth inquiry from Jay Leno, who again told him, “I have enough money to buy it,” the owner replied, “Mr. Leno I have enough money to keep it.” Jay hasn’t called back.
From the gallery, we then met our guides at the Bastrop Museum and Visitor Center. The guides took their seats on the bus and then led us around old Bastrop, providing highlights and stories for twenty or more buildings we passed along the route. After our driving tour, the seniors were on their own for lunch. Some ventured to a restaurant overlooking the river walk below town, others tried several of the wonderful restaurants along Main Street. From lunch, the group went to the focal point of the trip, The Bastrop Museum and Visitor Center.

![At left, the museum’s cotton exhibit. Photo by BeaAnn Kelly.](image)

The museum features displays that cover the natural history and the cultural history of Bastrop County. One exhibit featured a mammoth skull found locally. A nice display of archaic arrowheads are in the museum, as is a selection of rifles and other guns used by early settlers and residents. Nothing was more important than cotton to the local economy, and the exhibit about cotton does a nice job of demonstrating how intertwined the community was with cotton and its cultivation. Bastrop was on the western edge of the frontier when it was settled in the 1830s and 40s. One famous resident was Josiah Wilbarger who, in 1838, was attacked by Native Americans. He was subdued, scalped and left for dead. He survived, though scalp less, and lived another 11 years. His wife wove a cap to protect his bare-boned head, a true skull cap. His memoirs of *Indian Depredations* are still available today. The museum has several items from his estate, including a dress worn by his young daughter about the time he almost perished.

![At left, Mary Wilbarger’s dress from the 1840s. She was a child of Josiah. Photo by Fred Collins. At right, an early Bastrop firetruck. Photo by BeaAnn Kelly.](image)

The museum included information about life in Texas from the 1820s to 1850s. An interesting example is the picture below. During colonization by Americans from the United States in the 1820s, Mexico required that all immigrants become citizens and Catholics. Weddings could only be administered by priests of the Catholic Church. Priests were in short supply, and a traveling priest may only come by every six months to a year. Couples who wanted to marry would enter into a legal
partnership contract and proceed as if married. However, when the priest showed up, they would have to be married to comply with Mexican law and qualify for land grants. Consequently, there were frequently group weddings. Of course if you missed the priest a time or two, several years may have passed since the contract was initiated. The painting depicts what such a gathering may have looked like in Texas long ago.

The Museum also includes a large section on the World War veterans of Bastrop County. Most of those from World War II are pictured. Many of their personal stories are preserved by the Historical Society. The museum also has a small theater which runs oral histories from area residents. Other sections cover the floods that devastated Bastrop prior to the damming of the Colorado River and the conservation efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which built Buescher and Bastrop State Parks in the 1930s. The newest addition to the museum is a display that describes the tragedy of the 2011 Bastrop fire. This is a fine example of a county museum. They have a great staff, and it is well worth your time to visit.

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

Future trips: You may now sign up for all history bus trips through the end of 2017. **October 27** Montgomery County, Fernland Historical Park; **November 18** (Saturday) Liendo Plantation Civil War Reenactment; and **December 1** Antique Christmas Shopping. Sign up for future trips by emailing [cypressstop@pct3.com](mailto:cypressstop@pct3.com) 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 dawn to dusk. The buildings are now open Tuesdays through Thursdays from 9 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, we are happy to have you visit the store anytime while we are there, we will likely have time 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. It offers 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 also 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 October and November calendars can be found on the precinct 3 web site. [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com) There is a link from the park web page as well.