Commissioner Steve Radack wishes you a Happy Thanksgiving. We hope you enjoy the holiday with family, friends, football, shopping, and turkey with dressing and pumpkin pie. May we all return to work more "well-rounded!"

This October, Cypress Top Historic Park was more active as we completed our first full month of being open three days per week. The park is now open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. As always, park grounds are open seven days a week, dawn to dusk.

October is a popular month for groups to visit the park. Group visitors this October included the Sam Houston Corvette Club and the Spring Branch Independent School District retirees.

The Sam Houston Corvette Club took advantage of a beautiful October Saturday to visit Cypress Top for a BBQ lunch and tour of the site. Founded in 1993, the club has around 165 families with over 200 Corvettes. While 38 club members enjoyed the amenities provided in our picnic grounds, nearly two dozen gorgeous Corvettes graced our parking lot alongside the historic Juergen House. After lunch, club members gathered for a tour. They enjoyed the displays in Juergen’s Store and were fascinated by the old bar and saloon counters. Their enthusiasm rose as they went from building to building culminating at the Humble service station.

The Spring Branch ISD retirees were all former schoolteachers and were interested in every facet of the buildings and their contents. They enjoyed their guides’ stories and laughed at their jokes. The convivial group especially enjoyed the student quizzes Cypress Historical Society volunteer Jay Gavitt shared with them. He too is a former history teacher. In the Juergen House they listened carefully to the story of how the building, though an odd residence, perfectly fits the idea of being an 1856 railroad stop hotel.
The October History Bus Trip made a pair of interesting stops about an hour north of Cypress Top. Our first stop was in Plantersville, at St. Mary’s Catholic Church. The site for the church had been purchased in 1894 by the Diocese of Galveston and had once been a part of John Landrum’s Austin Colony grant. A parish was soon established and a church built to accommodate the original 70 families. In 1917, the bell tower of this original church was struck by lightning and the church burned to the ground. The present church quickly replaced it—albeit without the bell tower.

St Mary’s is one of Texas’ famous “painted churches,” renowned for their vibrant and bright colors. Painted churches are known for the elaborate faux-finishes found on interior surfaces, many of which mimic stone and polished marble. Itinerant
artists who advertised their services in church bulletins did much of the painting. The painted interior of St. Mary’s originally reflected the heritage of the first parishioners, largely of German and Polish descent. Over the years, much of the interior was painted over or otherwise covered. Beginning in 2002, a careful restoration project at St. Mary’s began. Workers removing paint layers discovered original paint colors and patterns, which have now been faithfully recreated. Our group was graciously offered the opportunity to take with them some of the flowers being removed from the sanctuary and many went home with some beautiful bouquets.

From St. Mary’s we headed east into Montgomery, where participants enjoyed a fine lunch at a local roadhouse and grill adjacent to historic downtown. After lunch, we traveled to the other side of historic downtown, where we were met by our tour guides, Dana and Julie, at Fernland Historical Park. Here we toured a collection of historic buildings, which had been acquired by Carroll and Mae Tharp. Mr. Tharp was a preservation architect by trade and a former member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Over a period of 20 years, the Tharps located, acquired and then took great care in assuring authentic restoration of these buildings. The Tharps eventually donated the buildings to Sam Houston State University. The University and the City of Montgomery developed a partnership and moved the buildings to Montgomery. The Montgomery
site provides more people easier access to the buildings and their histories. In 2013, management of the park was taken over by the City of Montgomery.

At left, Fernland tour guide Dana Bickford chats with tour participants about early Texas life. At right, the interior of one of the log cabins. Photos by Margo Herman.

At left, a roller organ. At right, a patented food warmer. Photos by Margo Beck.

In addition to the buildings, there are a plethora of early artifacts typical of the later portion of the 19th century. They included a "roller organ" a type of early hand cranked music box and a patented foot warmer. Foot warmers were designed to sit on a stove to take up the heat and were then placed in the wagon floorboard to keep your feet warm while driving.

Bus tour participants enter the Hulon House at Fernland, a Civil War-era Greek revival plantation house. Photo by Margo Herman.
The park also has this pine tree cross section which is more than six feet in diameter from a tree more than 600 years old. Such trees were common and provided a quality of lumber unsurpassed for early Texas homes and industry. Fernland Historical Park truly brings together early Texas life and architecture. The log homes and cabins presented within the park are some of the oldest remaining structures in Texas. The docents suggested we take a stroll through neighboring Memory Park and even provided some goodies to feed the fish. We rounded out the day by making one last stop at an ice cream shop.

600 year old pine tree cross section. Photo by Margo Herman.

**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 the following history bus trips. **November 18** (Saturday) Liendo Plantation Civil War Reenactment; **December 1** Antique Christmas Shopping to Elgin, Giddings and Carmine, **January 19** Bell County Museum in Belton, **February 16** Danish Heritage Preservation Society Museum Complex in Danevang and **March 16** Burton Cotton Gin and Chappell Hill Museum. Sign up for future trips by emailing 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 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, 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 November and December 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.