Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff invite you to visit the park and museums and learn more about the local history of the Cypress area.

History Bus Trip
The March History Bus Trip went to the Texas Cotton Gin Museum in Burton and the Chappell Hill Historical Society Museum in Chappell Hill. The weather was a delight and the bluebonnets and other wildflowers along the route were beautiful. The group began the day with a stop at a bakery for a kolache and coffee before proceeding to the museums. At the Texas Cotton Gin Museum, they learned about the process of ginning cotton, which is how the seeds are removed from the cotton fiber. The machine to remove the seeds is called a gin, a shortened form of "engine." The cotton lint is also baled at the gin to make it easier to store or ship.

At left, the Texas Cotton Gin Museum in Burton. At right, a guide explains the ginning process. Photos by Jim Pulliam.

The museum displays explain the origins and evolution of the ginning process and has a replica of an Eli Whitney cotton gin. This small machine was invented circa 1793 and allowed one man to process more cotton in a single day than a crew of 20 could by hand. The small, simple machine changed the fate of the American South and altered history. The invention was soon copied and made larger with horse power, then steam and eventually diesel engines. Instead of processing pounds in a day, current gins process tons in a day. The gin at Burton was built in 1914 and was a boom to the region.

At left, a hand-turned cotton gin similar to that invented by Eli Whitney. At right, the seniors head to the Texas Cotton Gin. Photos by Jim Pulliam.
Although over 100 years old and not in commercial operation, the old gin still runs with every part and piece still in working order. In fact, each year the museum hosts a special weekend when the gin is operated. The old engine and the production process are impressive. The seeds are actually separated from the cotton fiber on the floor of the gin, where saw blades pull the fiber through a slot too small for the seeds to slip through. The seeds are expelled into a different compartment. Both the fiber and seed have value and both are important to the economics of cotton production.

The fiber goes into a press which forms a bale about five feet by three feet by two feet. These bales weigh about 450 pounds. These bales are then shipped or stored.

After their visit to the cotton gin it was time for lunch. The bus took the seniors to old downtown Brenham and dropped them off at the Washington County courthouse. They had some free time to eat lunch and explore the historic district. Some chose to shop and eat. Others ate lunch and visited a historic drug store.
After lunch the group visited the Chappell Hill Historical Society Museum. This nice museum is tucked out of the way off the main street of Chappell Hill in the old high school. That is fitting because Chappell Hill was a cradle for education in early Texas. Both the state men’s and women’s universities were in Chappell Hill, as was an Episcopal school. None of these colleges survived into the 20th century, but each gave rise to universities that thrive today.

The Chappell Hill Historical Society Museum tour also included visits to two historic churches, the Chappell Hill Methodist Church and the Providence Baptist Church. Both churches were founded in the Texas Republic era and still serve congregations today. The current Baptist church building was built in 1873 and the Methodist building was built in 1901.
At left, the interior of the 1901 Methodist church building. At right, the interior of the 1873 Baptist church building. Photos by Jim Pulliam.

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

Future trips: There is now a waitlist for the May 18 trip to Beaumont for a Neches River boat cruise. You may now sign up for the June 15 bus trip to the Texas Military Forces Museum in Austin. Sign up for future trips by emailing cypresstop@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 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 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 April and May calendars can be found on the Precinct 3 web site. www.pct3.com There is a link from the park web page as well.