Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff wish you a Happy Valentine’s Day. The history of Valentine’s Day is clouded in mystery in spite of much conjecture. However, Jack B. Oruch wrote that the first recorded association of Valentine’s Day with romantic love is in *Parlement of Foules* (1382) by Geoffrey Chaucer.

Chaucer wrote:
"For this was on St. Valentine’s Day,
When every bird cometh there to choose his mate."

It amazes me how a single phrase in a 14th century book can grow into a multibillion dollar industry. We hope your Valentine’s Day is filled with romance and joy with your loved one.

The Senior History Bus Trip visited Galveston Island in January and toured two of the famous historic homes. The Seniors first went to the Bishop’s Palace.

The house was built by Galveston architect Nicholas J. Clayton between 1887 and 1893 for lawyer and politician Walter Gresham, his wife Josephine, and their nine children. The Gresham mansion was made entirely of stone with decorative, detailed woodwork on the inside. All of the interior woodwork was hand-carved on site except the staircase, which was built in three pieces and transported by ship to Galveston to be assembled at the Palace. The Palace’s quality craftsmanship made it sturdy enough to withstand the great hurricane of 1900. Since the Gresham’s home has 50 rooms, it provided refuge to hundreds of survivors of the hurricane. In 1923, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Galveston purchased the house and it served as the residence for Bishop Christopher E. Byrne. Hence it became known as the Bishop’s Palace. Today, the house is owned and operated by the Galveston Historical Foundation.
Above, the seniors listen to their guide in the Bishop’s Palace. Photo by John Lumb.

At left, the grand dining room with a ceiling mural painted by Mrs. Gresham. At right, the grand entryway staircase. Photos by John Lumb.
Following the tour of the Bishop’s Palace, the Seniors had a leisurely lunch, and then it was off to tour the Menard House. This mansion is quite different from the Bishop’s Palace. Michel B. Menard arrived in Texas in 1829 at the age of 25. He had Mexican Citizen Juan Seguin, who fought with Sam Houston at the Battle of San Jacinto, purchase 4,600 acres at the eastern end of Galveston Island on his behalf. Menard formed the Galveston City Company with Samuel May Williams and other prominent Texas businessmen in 1838 with the land from Seguin’s purchase. Galveston was incorporated in 1839.
In 1838, Menard had white pine lumber and four fluted columns shipped to him from Maine on sailing vessels. He built a house in the Greek Revival style and named it “The Oaks”. Today it is the oldest house on the island and is surrounded by great Live Oak trees. The house was listed in the 1940 WPA Guide to Texas as a point of interest in Galveston. The furniture and decor, with few exceptions, all date from the first half of the 19th century. Carpets, drapes and upholstery fabrics are reproductions appropriate to the time.

Michel Menard died in 1856 and his descendants occupied the house until 1879. In 1880, the house was bought by Edwin N. Ketchum. Ketchum was police chief during the 1900 storm. The Ketchum Family owned the home until the 1970s. During the early 1990s, the house was in such disrepair that it was threatened with demolition by the City of Galveston. The house and property were donated to Galveston Historical Foundation in 2016.

The Galveston Historical Foundation will be having a historical marker dedication for their newly renovated Telegraph Building on March 9, 2019 at 11 AM at the Menard House site. This free event is to commemorate the Zimmermann Telegram, and Galveston’s role in the retransmission of the message. In January 1917, British Intelligence intercepted and decrypted a telegram from Arthur Zimmermann to Mexico. Zimmermann offered Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona to Mexico if they joined the German cause during World War I. This telegram was one of the deciding factors in the United States entering the war. The Telegraph Building was originally at 1819 Avenue O in Galveston, and was used by the Mexican Telegraph Company. It originally housed batteries and equipment for transmissions to and from Mexico. This small building was the location for the retransmission of the Zimmermann Telegram to Mexico. In 1995, the building was saved from demolition and relocated to land behind the Menard House, where the dedication ceremony will take place.

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

There is now a waitlist for the February 15 trip to Wharton to visit the Wharton County Courthouse, the Carriage Museum, and the Matagorda County Museum and the March 15 trip to Goliad to visit the Goliad County Courthouse and the Mission Espiritu Santo. You may now sign up for the May 17 trip to Schulenburg to see the Painted Churches.

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 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, 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, offering 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 February and March calendars can be found on the Precinct 3 web site. www.pct3.com. There is a link from the park web page as well.