Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff wish you a celebratory Texas Independence Day on March 2, a solemn and memorable March 6, remembering the Alamo, a reminder we switch to Daylight Savings time on March 10, a delightful Saint Patrick’s Day March 17, and a verdant “First Day of Spring” on March 20.

The Texas Independence Day Celebration at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site is an annual two-day living history celebration on Saturday and Sunday, March 2 and 3, 2019. It celebrates the 59 delegates who bravely met in 1836 to make a formal “Declaration of Independence” from Mexico. The celebration will have music, traditional dance groups, a historic medicine show, a magic show, and a Punch & Judy show. This is in addition to vendors and historical activities that will be demonstrated both days. It’s a great experience for young and old, and I would encourage you to visit, especially if you have never attended or visited the site.

**Senior Bus Trip**
The Senior History Bus Trip visited Matagorda and Wharton Counties in February. While very close, it always surprises me how seldom I visit these counties in spite of their rich history.

The first stop was the Wharton County Courthouse. Wharton County was founded in 1846 from a parcel of Stephen F. Austin's Land Grant from Mexico. The William Kincheloe Family donated land on the east bank of the Colorado River for a courthouse square. Two previous buildings, constructed in 1848 and 1852, served as courthouses before the county constructed its current historic courthouse. Highly controversial, it was planned despite petitions and injunctions.
Construction began in 1888 and was completed in August 1889. By the early 2000s, the Courthouse was outdated and in disrepair. With the support of a non-profit group and funding from the state of Texas, the three-year restoration was complete. Today it is as grand as when it was new.

The Seniors were able to tour the first floor, which has original flooring and doorways. On the second floor, the Seniors were able to briefly watch part of a court hearing, as court was in session that day. Atop the building sits the clock tower with a working clock of the same vintage as the original clock. This clock tower is infamous for being the sniper’s nest in an 1898 assassination of a candidate for Sheriff. Although the assassin was purportedly known to locals, no charges were ever filed. Maybe politics today are not as bad as we think.

On a second-floor roof of the Courthouse sits the original bell. The bell was restored in the 21st century, and taken to every school in the area. Every child who wanted to was able to ring the bell, giving them a memorable experience.

The Morris Ranch Carriage House Museum was next on the stop. The owners, one of whom is 99 year old Stewart Morris Sr., rode up on a horse-drawn carriage to begin our tour. Stewart Morris Sr. is a legend. He made Stewart Title into an international powerhouse. With operations in all 50 states and in 40 countries, it is the largest title company of Texas. He was also an integral part in the founding of Houston Baptist University and has made lifetime donations of more than 25 million dollars. From him and his son, the seniors learned about the history of carriages and saw dozens of carriages and accessories that are housed in the museum. Some are centuries old. Most had interesting stories, including one used in the movie Gone with the Wind!
The Seniors had a great lunch at Hinze’s Country Kitchen. The atmosphere was relaxed; the personnel was friendly and accommodating. The food was delicious, portions were very generous, and numerous folks left the restaurant with doggie bags.

The last stop on the trip was the Matagorda County Museum in Bay City. Matagorda was established in 1829 at the mouth of the Colorado River. Five years later, Matagorda was the third largest town in Texas, and by 1836, it was the County Seat. Matagorda was devastated first by an 1875 hurricane and then by the intense 1886 hurricane that currently ranks as the 8th most powerful storm to hit the United States. Therefore, the county seat was moved to Bay City. By the turn of the 20th Century, oil had been discovered, and farmers began cultivating rice. Matagorda Bay is also where the La Belle Shipwreck of famous explorer Robert de La Salle was excavated.

The museum is one of several along the gulf coast which exhibit artifacts from the La Belle. One of the three recovered cannons is housed there. Exhibits include “The La Salle Odessey”, “The Quintessential Cowboy,” and “Rivers, Rice and Railroads.” Also in the museum is a children’s hands-on museum with numerous rooms set up as a turn-of-the-century small town. Each room has murals on the walls and artifacts depicting particular buildings. These include a typical prairie house, one-room schoolhouse, general store, jail, bank, barbershop, opera house and even a stagecoach. One room has vintage clothes for children to play dress up. They can mail a letter at the post office and at the jail, there are props for kids to play cops and robbers. The Seniors enjoyed all the exhibits as much as any child would. The museum is housed in a former post office, built in 1918, and depicts the long and rich history of the area.

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

The March 15 trip to Goliad will be to visit the Goliad County Courthouse and the Mission Espiritu Santo. You may add your name to the waitlist for this trip. There is no history trip scheduled for April. The May 17 trip will be to Schulenburg to tour the Painted Churches in the area. 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 3 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 March and April calendars can be found on the Precinct 3 web site. www.pct3.com. There is a link from the park web page as well.