Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff wish you a Happy Father’s Day.

There were no special tours in May at Cypress Top. However, the May Senior Bus Trip visited Schulenburg’s famous Painted Churches. None of the churches are in Schulenburg itself, but scattered across the countryside in once-prominent communities. The Seniors visited churches in Dubina, High Hill, Praha, and Ammannsville. While these are handsome steeple churches on the outside, the beauty of the interior clearly expresses the parishioners’ love of their Lord, their religion, and their community. German and Czech immigrants built these churches in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They painted them to resemble the elaborate churches they left behind in Europe. Participants were able to tour four painted churches: Sts. Cyril and Methodius, St. John the Baptist, St. Mary’s of Praha, and St. Mary’s of High Hill. The bus went to the Chamber of Commerce in Schulenburg and picked up our guide, a retired schoolteacher. She was delightful and well-versed in every aspect of each church.

However, it was first necessary to make a breakfast stop at a well-known Schulenberg bakery. Not only did many Seniors buy kolaches and cinnamon rolls for breakfast, but they also bought loads of bakery items to see them through the week! After a fine breakfast it was on to the churches.

The first church the group visited was Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Dubina. Dubina was the first Czech settlement in Texas. The community was established in 1856 and the church in 1878. The present church sanctuary was built in 1911 after a hurricane destroyed the previous building in 1909. The parish had 600 members at the time. This church was an idyllic setting. It is flanked on one side by a community-gathering place and a by a cemetery on another.
The Sts. Cyril and Methodius building has served its parishioners for more than 100 years through major changes in technology and style. Electricity was added mid-century, and the walls and ceiling were painted white. This obliterated the wonderful early 20th century work of a professional church artist from San Antonio. In the 1980s, the parishioners decided to restore the church’s original painting. Study of old photographs and careful removal of the white paint revealed the design and colors of the original painting. Some areas required a bit of speculation and artistic license, but the church was eventually restored to its original splendor, including re-stenciling more than 1300 stars on the ceiling. On the day of our visit, professional painters and workmen were restoring the building’s interior. It is a continual labor of love to maintain these beautiful and historic structures.

Next up was St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Ammannsville, another idyllic setting most welcoming to the Seniors. Behind the church, near 400-year-old oak trees that sheltered the first immigrants in the 1850s, there is now a community-gathering pavilion. On the side of the church is a cemetery where many former parishioners have been laid to rest.
As with Sts. Cyril and Methodius, the St. John’s parish had experienced tragedy with previous buildings including fire and the 1909 hurricane. Also like Sts. Cyril and Methodius, the church experienced the introduction of electricity and fluorescent lighting. This caused a good bit of discussion when the building was historically restored around 1989. Eventually it was decided that the art deco fluorescent fixtures were “historical,” and they were left in the church when it was restored. This church’s painting is perhaps the best artistic quality of all the churches. The altar was built by the Cedar Brothers of San Antonio that specialized in church furniture during the late 1800s and early 20th century.

St. Mary’s of High Hill is known as the “Queen of the Painted Churches.” In addition to its magnificent interior painting, it features eighteen stained glass windows and original artwork from the late 1800s.

At left, the exterior of St. Mary’s at High Hill. The photo distorts the soaring height. At right, the interior. Photos by Fred Collins.
This current cathedral occupied by the parish was built in 1906. The German-Catholic parish purchased the stained glass windows from Berlin in 1905. The ceiling, unlike the other churches the Seniors saw that day, is painted on canvas and was completed in 1912. A 1900 vintage pipe organ was added in 1935. The crucifixion in the center of the altar is a stained glass window. Behind the altar is a clear window that illuminates it. The scene is imposing. This building was restored in 2010, the canvas re-glued to the ceiling and new gold leaf applied. This church building is magnificent and, as with the others, is the hub of the community with a gathering place and extensive cemetery.

The Seniors took a lunch break at a well-known local restaurant and many took advantage of the buffet. They enjoyed all-you-can-eat salads, barbeque ribs, fried chicken, sausage and sauerkraut, a variety of veggies, and, to top it all off, bread pudding, banana pudding or peach cobbler. It was a heavenly lunch to match the heavenly tour.

The final church of the day was another St. Mary’s, St. Mary’s Church of the Assumption in Praha. The community was Czech and founded in 1855. This imposing stone masonry church is on a small hill and dominates the landscape. It was constructed between 1892 and 1895.
The church had many features in common with the other churches the Seniors had visited, but this one was unique in that the painting allowed the individual boards in the ceiling to be seen. The effect was beautiful and seemed to give the entire scene a more hand-crafted, genuine flavor. The doors were also painted elaborately in this church, as one can observe in the picture below.

It had been a full day, but we did not want the Seniors going home until they were completely satiated. So our final stop was Dairy Queen in Weimar. Needless to say, our Seniors went home full of wonderful experiences, splendid sights, uplifted spirits, and delicious food. I hope you will join us on one of our future trips.

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

There is a waiting list for the **June 21** trip to the Van Gogh Exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. You may now sign up for the **July 19** trip to the San Jacinto Battleground and Monument Museum and the Lone Star Flight Museum. You may also sign up for the **August 9** trip to the McLennan County Courthouse, “Branding the Brazos” statue, and Armstrong
Browning Library in Waco. Sign up for future trips by emailing cypresstop@pct3.hctx.net 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](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 June and July 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.

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