Steve Radack, Commissioner
Harris County Precinct 3

Cypress Top Historic Park

July 2019

Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff wish you a safe and happy Fourth of July, and hope you enjoy the concerts and professional fireworks displays. In 1776, a group of patriots (rebels in the eyes of England) declared our independence. The War of Independence drug on for six difficult, bloody years. Each side won and lost battles, but most often the situation resulted in a stalemate. Finally, George Washington, with the help of the French, captured General Cornwallis’ army of 9000 troops and the battles ended. Two years later (1783) a peace treaty was signed. The independent colonies formed a confederation that did not function well. The states agreed to a constitutional convention held in 1787. After four months of debate, compromise and deliberation, a constitution was submitted to the thirteen colonies for ratification. When Ben Franklin emerged from the successful convention, he was asked what kind of government we now had. He replied “…a republic, if you can keep it.” With ratification in 1789, we became the United States of America. With that history in mind as we celebrate this joyous national holiday, let us remember this great experiment of our democratic republic and dedicate ourselves to keeping it.

There were no special tours in June at Cypress Top. However, CHS held its children’s summer camp. Since the camp took place late in June, it will be reported in the August newsletter.

We also had a volunteer work on the gristmill building. The structure is thought to date from about 1910 and is of board and batten construction. One of the old boards was recently broken and had to be replaced. He also replaced many of the missing batten that had been lost over time. The “new wood” is actually 100-year-old lumber, and the fresh cut edges will soon weather to match the existing barn. The building has a door on the west side for a belt to travel from the drive shaft inside the building to the pump located a few feet outside the building. This door had been sealed. Our volunteer opened the door and affixed a latch, so we may once again demonstrate for visitors how the belt attached to the line shaft, which was belt driven by an old 2 cylinder engine.

The June Cypress Top Historic bus trip was to the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. The seniors arrived early, so visited the Gardens near Herman Park. Once the museum opened, they went directly to the Vincent van Gogh: His Life in Art exhibit.
Van Gogh is one of the most iconic artists in the history of Western art. The exhibit follows Van Gogh (1853–1890) through four key stages of his career, from early sketches to final paintings with more than 50 masterworks. Few artists left behind as complete a diary of life and work as Van Gogh, whose decade-long career as an artist began when he took up painting in 1881. The famous painting below was part of the exhibit.

Vincent van Gogh, Self-Portrait, 1887, oil on cardboard, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation). (From MFAH website)
At left, Vincent van Gogh, Peasant Woman Binding Sheaves (after Millet), September 1889, oil on canvas on cardboard, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation). At right, Vincent van Gogh, Irises, May 1890, oil on canvas, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation). Pictures from MFAH website.

At left, the seniors get up close and personal with a Van Gogh work. At right, they were even allowed to take pictures. Photos by Kaitlin Will.
Above are tools like those used by Van Gogh as well as a facsimile of one of his sketch notebooks. Photo by Kaitlin Will.

At left, seniors marvel at the simple subject of a pair of shoes. Photo by Kaitlin Will.
At right, a senior points out something of interest on this small masterpiece. Photo by Linda Martin-Rust.
Following the viewing of the Van Gogh exhibit, the group went to lunch. They enjoyed a hearty meal with interesting conversation.

At left, seniors with big hamburgers and great conversation. At right, a senior expresses himself over lunch. Photos by Kaitlin Will.

They then returned to the art museum to look at the other permanent exhibit galleries. The collection is varied and includes much more than paintings. It was a beautiful, cool way to spend a hot, humid, summer day in Houston.

Above, three seniors marvel at contemporary art. Photo by Kaitlin Will.
Above, seniors also found ancient art to be fascinating. Photo by Kaitlin Will.

The best part of the day was that the seniors were able to immerse themselves in Van Gogh!

Above photos taken by Irene McDonald (left) and MFAH staff (right).
Signing Up for Senior History Bus Trips (Must be at least 50 years old to go on these trips)

Spaces are still available for the July 19 trip to the San Jacinto Battleground and Monument Museum and the Lone Star Flight Museum, the August 9 trip to the McLennan County Courthouse, “Branding the Brazos” Statue, and Armstrong Browning Library in Waco and the September 20 trip, destination to be determined. 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, our staff and volunteers 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 July and August calendars can be found on the Precinct 3 web site. www.pct3.com. There is a link from the park web page as well.

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