

Joseph Jaeger Joseph (Joe)-2009

Jaeger was an important leader in the early development and operation of the Missouri State Park system. Joe served as its longest tenured director (terms of 1955 to 1963 and 1966 to 1973) and was instrumental in increased professionalism at all levels while guiding the growth of the system that millions of park visitors enjoy today. In 1953, the Missouri State Park system was in need of definition and a specific mission. Through the efforts of Mr. Jaeger, legislation was finally passed providing this essential framework for the future. Under his leadership, 25 parks were added, along with the system's first historic sites (First State Capitol at St. Charles, birthplaces of Harry S. Truman, and General John J. Pershing). He championed innovative projects such as the Braille Trail at Elephant Rocks State Park and created the first Missouri State Park Ranger program for law enforcement. A tremendous opportunity came to Jaeger in 1963. He was tapped to oversee the development of the national park and historic monument system for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Upon his return to Missouri, he was appointed to the Missouri State Park Advisory Board, and served for 10 years as both member and Chair, giving him almost 30 years of service to Missouri State Parks. Joe Jaeger was a key player in the formation of the Missouri Park and Recreation Association in 1959 and was its second president, serving two terms from 1961 to 1963. In 1961, he was instrumental in helping to create enabling legislation allowing Missouri political subdivisions to operate and create a levy for local park systems, Missouri State Statute 67.775. Many local communities have used this statute in developing their parks and recreation departments.