

Cultural Resources Addressed at MPA Annual Meeting

MPA's October 2018 annual meeting at Watkins Mill State Historic Site was built around the theme of cultural resources. It was parallel to the 2017 MPA annual meeting, which focused on the need for more active natural resource stewardship in the state park system. (see *Heritage*, December 2017)

Like its history of natural resource stewardship, Missouri State Parks has a proud history of cultural resource preservation and stewardship as well. Although the emphasis at the origin of the state park system in the 1920s was on parks with important natural features, such as the big springs in the Ozarks, several of them—especially Alley Spring and Bennett Spring—featured important mills and other historic structures.

Citizen groups with a passion for history made certain that the state did not neglect their favorite sites: the Daughters of the American Revolution lobbied the state to appropriate funds in 1923 to purchase the Huston Tavern at Arrow Rock, which became the first unit of the new system, and the Mark Twain Memorial Park Association acquired and donated Twain's birthplace cabin in 1924. In 1932, two premier archaeological sites—a village site of the Missouria Indians was donated by the Van Meter family, and a Mississippian-era petroglyph site in Washington County was donated anonymously. In 1937, the state added two parks to memorialize important military leaders from north Missouri, Generals John J. Pershing and Enoch Crowder.

Moreover, when the federal New Deal programs of the CCC and WPA provided funding and workmen to develop virtually all of the more than



Watkins Woolen Mill State Historic Site, a National Historic Landmark, has the finest, most intact assemblage of milling machinery of any 19th century mill in the nation.

two dozen parks in the system during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the system acquired cabins, lodges, pavilions, bridges and other stonework of such enduring quality that by the 1980s Missouri would lead the nation in inventorying its New Deal structures. Its success in nominating more than 350 of them to the National Register of Historic Places—the largest multiple resource nomination in the nation up to that time—and providing for their expert restoration and interpretation encouraged a number of other states to follow suit.

The quality of Missouri's historic sites is exceptional, including several that in other states might be national historic sites, such as the National Historic Landmarks at Arrow Rock, Ste. Genevieve, Watkins Mill, Pershing, Scott Joplin, Graham Cave, and Van Meter. And their restoration and interpretation for the public over the years has also been exceptional.

Missouri has also won national recognition for another important cultural resource stewardship program that, while separately authorized and funded, has been housed within the park division and contributes symbiotically to it. The State Office of Historic Preservation, established following passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, led the nation for a time in the amount of private investment in the restoration of historic buildings, especially in St. Louis and Kansas City. Since 1976, Missouri Heritage Trust—now known as Missouri Preservation—has led in educating citizens and encouraging private and public preservation policies and action statewide. Preservation efforts have been further aided by the Certified Local

Government program (administered by the National Park Service), now functioning in 59 communities across the state, and federal and state historic tax credit programs, which have led to the restoration or rehabilitation rather than demolition of historic structures, greatly enhancing communities and resulting in increased property values and tax revenues. The program celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2018 with a new statewide historic preservation plan.

Yet the feeling has persisted among MPA leaders and others, despite the quality of Missouri's cultural resources and the passion of their advocates, that the leaders of state parks, DNR, and the General Assembly over the years have been more interested in natural and recreational resources than in the cultural resources.

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A New Partnership with Friends of Arrow Rock

by Kendra Varns Wallis

On November 28th, Missouri State Parks hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony at Arrow Rock State Historic Site's J. Huston Tavern to officially transfer operations to the Friends of Arrow Rock, Inc. The Friends will manage the J. Huston Tavern beginning January 1, 2019 and anticipates opening the restaurant for the 2019 season in March.



Friends of Arrow Rock and Missouri State Park staff at the ribbon cutting ceremony.

"Missouri State Parks has been running this historic tavern since 2013. We wanted to keep it operating so it would remain the oldest continuously operating restaurant west of the Mississippi," said Ben Ellis, state parks director. "This partnership will benefit all, as the Friends of Arrow Rock will operate the tavern and Missouri State Parks will continue to assist with utilities, equipment and maintenance."

The tavern, which dates back to 1834, provides hearty family-style dining at a modest price, much as in the early years. The Federal-style building was first built as a private family home for Joseph Huston, an early Arrow Rock settler and civic leader from Virginia. Thousands of settlers heading west on the Santa Fe Trail passed by the residence on Main Street, and Huston began offering lodging and meals to travelers and local citizens.

In 1923, the tavern was purchased by the state at the urging of the Missouri Daughters of the American Revolution, who then raised funds for its restoration to match a \$6,000 grant from the General Assembly, making it the first building in the state purchased and restored with public funds for historic preservation purposes. The DAR then served as manager and custodian of the tavern until 1984, after which the state park system undertook another, more extensive restoration and began to operate it through a bidded concession contract until recent years, when Arrow Rock State Historic Site staff operated it directly.

The entire town of Arrow Rock including the tavern at its core won designation in 1963 as a National Historic Landmark, one of the earliest such designations in the state.

J. Huston Tavern remains a centerpiece of the Arrow Rock State Historic Site thanks to the dedicated members of the Friends of Arrow Rock. The friends group was established in 1959 during a meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution that took place at the tavern, and it has been probably the most ambitious friends group in the state park system, having saved, restored, and operated more than a dozen historic properties in Arrow Rock beyond those included in the state historic site, and inspired many private restorations as well. Since 1965, Friends of Arrow Rock has provided educational programs and tours to thousands of visitors each year in cooperation with park officials.

Make plans to visit the state's first historic site and dine at the J. Huston Tavern. The town also offers antique and gift shops, bed and breakfasts, Arrow Rock Lyceum Theater, and several other restaurants. For more information and to learn more about the site and the town, read the essay in the state park book and visit mostateparks.com and FriendsOfArrowRock.org. Arrow Rock is located 14 miles north of Interstate 70 at exits 89 or 98 on U.S. Highway 41.



J. Huston Tavern, built 1834.

Conservation Champion Pat Jones

by Susan Flader

Missouri lost a conservation champion December 17th with the passing of Pat Jones, a former president of the Missouri Parks Association and always a strong supporter.

Pat and her husband Ted became known to many Missouri conservationists in the 1980s when they not only contributed the initial \$2.2 million for acquisition and development of the MKT Railroad corridor but also worked relentlessly to make the Katy Trail a reality in the face of strong opposition from some legislators and landowners along the route. Less well known is that they also offered seed money for the Rock Island corridor, which came within a hair's breadth of reality in 1993 but sadly could not be finalized within the allotted time. MPA director Darwin Hindman, who worked closely with the Joneses on their trail efforts for Missouri, says Pat and Ted actually met on a bicycle trip. They were visionaries who knew how popular and economically vital such trails would become for Missouri families and communities.

After Ted succumbed to cancer in 1990, just after dedication of the first segment of the Katy Trail, Pat came into her own as a passionate conservationist. She had grown up spending summers exploring the outdoors on her family's farm near the Meramec River in the LaBarque Creek Watershed, which she and Ted helped MDC acquire in 1986 as the Hilda Young Conservation Area, to which she remained devoted throughout her life. At the University of Missouri she earned her degree in soil science, and kept up with the emerging field of soil health to her last days. She and Ted built their home on a farm initially acquired by his father near Williamsburg in Callaway County, which she cared for while Ted was off on business and where she lived the rest of her life.

In 1993 Pat joined the MPA board, and she was elected president in 1996. During her tenure, she threw the switch opening the last 40-mile gap in the Katy Trail between St. Charles and Sedalia. Also of enduring benefit, she arranged for her local Callaway Bank to handle direct deposit of MPA's membership dues, a move praised by auditors as providing extra assurance for a small non-profit.



Pat was also a major contributor to both the 1992 and 2016 editions of MPA's state park book, helping to ensure that it could be distributed gratis to public officials and public and school libraries across the state, especially in underserved areas.

In 1997 she donated her Williamsburg farm to MDC to become the Prairie Fork Conservation Area, devoted to restoration, education, and research, while retaining a life tenancy in her home there. With her characteristic thoughtfulness and vision, she also created the Prairie Fork Trust to provide oversight and

additional funding, forging a strong partnership between MDC, the School of Natural Resources at MU, and the Missouri Prairie Foundation for cooperative management of the area.

When DNR and state park officials saw an opportunity to acquire long-sought land at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers during the run-up to the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, Pat stepped up with a significant donation to help it along. The state honored her and Ted's many contributions to Missouri by naming it the Edward "Ted" and Pat Jones Confluence Point State Park at its dedication in 2004. Pat also made major contributions to The Nature Conservancy for the acquisition of Dunn Ranch Prairie in Harrison County, to Scenic Missouri for its efforts to control billboards and enhance natural beauty along Missouri highways, to the Missouri State Parks Foundation for a bicycle and pedestrian bridge across the Missouri River to connect the Katy Trail to Jefferson City, and many other causes.

But it was all the activity at Prairie Fork that brought the most joy to her final years. She mowed the grass on her riding mower into her nineties, greeted many of the thousands of school kids who came on field trips with her trademark "Learn, Get Dirty, and Have Fun," enjoyed riding on her gator to inspect the progress of continual prairie and wetland restoration, quizzed and encouraged university students doing research on the area and classes on field trips, and inspired an endless stream of friends and other visitors with her deep understanding and love of nature and history, her salty wit, and her ideas for making the world better. "If you care about something a great deal," she said, "give it away to someone else that cares about it, too. Then it can go on forever."

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The dinner speaker at MPA’s 2018 annual meeting, State Historical Society of Missouri Director Gary Kremer, gave voice to this sense as he recounted his first year as SHSM director, when the state legislature suddenly zeroed out his budget, apparently thinking SHSM’s functions were redundant with the State Archives; none of the other layers of leadership in the state or the University of Missouri, with which SHSM was affiliated, seemed to know much about SHSM or to care.

Kremer’s conclusions from the searing experience were that it is necessary to talk directly and regularly with legislators and other state leaders—something SHSM or MPA can do but cultural resource staff of the park division cannot—and that the stewards of history in various agencies and institutions need to cooperate much more closely with each other. He suggested that the upcoming bicentennial of Missouri statehood (2020-2021) is a good place to start.

Because MPA had already signaled at its 2017 annual meeting that it was just as concerned about cultural as natural resources and would be focusing on the cultural at its fall 2018 meeting, State Park Director Ben Ellis jumped ahead during his 2018 State of the Parks address to announce that the park division had already established a cultural resource stewardship initiative modelled on its natural resource and infrastructure rehabilitation initiatives for the coming year and beyond.

All three initiatives were designed to engage all units of the park system, from staff in each of the parks through district supervisors to statewide leadership in Jefferson City. State and district officials have organized dozens of resource training workshops for field personnel throughout the system to familiarize them with the new initiatives and procedures. Specific performance objectives are then prepared for each initiative for each facility manager, resource manager, and interpreter based on existing management plans for each park, including priority actions and minimum time standards, developed in a coordinated way through regional planning meetings. And each unit reports monthly on its accomplishments.

Ken McCarty, chief of natural resource management for the state park system, reported enthusiastically on how the reorganization has given the natural resource stewardship initiative he heads a structure for durability through time, since stewardship has now become part of the routine operations of each unit of the system, with staff evaluated based on their accomplishments on each of the performance objectives. With more staff throughout the state now engaged, they had already exceeded their minimum standards for prescribed burns, for example, and in his visits to parks he was delighted to see evidence of work being initiated at the local level.

Jon Fitch, who heads the infrastructure (maintenance and repair) initiative, reported on a new digital asset management system being developed and the process for identifying priority projects for the year systemwide. This year’s emphasis on “Keep it Dry” addresses critical roof, rot, and safety projects. In the FY2020 budget now in the legislature, the emphasis will be on priority historic structures, with \$3.1 million proposed for foundation repairs at Bollinger Mill and \$1.4 million for stonework stabilization on the castle at Ha Ha Tonka.



Dr. Mike Ohnorsorgen at the podium.

The lead speaker on the cultural resource stewardship panel, head of cultural resource management John Cunningham, reported on development of updated management plan abstracts, establishment of performance objectives, and training workshops for staff in both historic sites and parks, along the lines of those already developed for natural resources. Staff are being trained to prepare current condition assessment reports for each historic structure, using GIS and a Past Perfect data base, and they are also cataloguing all the artifacts in the system’s vast historic and archaeological collections.

Jim Ogle, executive director of Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area, which embraces and helps coordinate cultural sites and museums in some forty counties on both sides of the Kansas-Missouri border, discussed training workshops and technical assistance available through the National Park Service. The Heritage Area brings staff together across state and agency boundaries to learn from each other and gain new ideas and inspiration for cultural interpretation, marketing, and facility management, and to share special resources, such as traveling displays. State park staff at Watkins Mill and other Missouri parks have benefitted from such opportunities for years.

MPA and Park Briefs

The final panelist, Dr. Mike Ohnersorgen, discussed the work of the state park archaeologist, which involves archaeological field work and coordination with contract workers and consultants, legal compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and inventory, care, and management of archaeological artifact collections. There is a 60-year backlog of uncatalogued collections totaling some 800 boxes, to be examined, described, numbered, and entered into a new digital database, with work to be done primarily by staff and part-time assistants.

A month after the October meeting, MPA leaders learned that Cultural Resource Program head John Cuning would be retiring by the end of December. Cuning devoted his career to state parks as an historic site interpreter with special interest in living history, then facility head, chief of Interpretation for the system, and finally head of the new cultural resource program.

In January a new program director was announced: Dr. Mike Ohnersorgen, whom MPA leaders had first met at Watkins Mill in October. With cultural resource management experience in California, Arizona and Hawaii, field research in Mesoamerica, teaching in Alabama and at University of Missouri-St. Louis, and three years as state park archaeologist, he is well qualified for the new challenges. Staffing in cultural resources, especially in the regional and central offices, is still thin though hard working, and a new state park archaeologist will be hired. With the commitment of State Park Director Ben Ellis and the leadership of Dr. Mike, the future for cultural resource stewardship in state parks appears bright.

Rock Island Trail

At three well-attended public meetings (180-200 people at each) late last fall to gather more input on whether the state should accept the 144-mile Rock Island corridor offered by Ameren and its subsidiary, the Missouri Central Railroad, for a hiking and biking trail, attendees and others who submitted on-line comments were enormously supportive of the state accepting the corridor. DNR and state park officials have been negotiating with Ameren and the Missouri Central ever since, a sign of progress for trail supporters.

Facing a February deadline set by the federal Surface Transportation Board, the two sides applied for yet another extension to continue the complex negotiations. On February 7, the STB granted a 180-day extension, to August 20, 2019.

Riverfront Bridge near Jefferson Landing

The Jefferson City Council in December approved acceptance of a \$3.2 million gift to build an 826-foot pedestrian bridge just upstream of Jefferson Landing State Historic Site out to a new riverfront park on Adrian's Island between the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and the Missouri River. Jefferson Landing was developed and dedicated as Missouri's official project for our national bicentennial in 1976, and the new bridge and park are expected to be complete in time for dedication during the upcoming bicentennial of Missouri statehood in 2020-2021, bringing an important new dimension to the historic riverfront.

New MPA Directors

At its annual members meeting October 7, MPA elected two new directors: Dennis Wilhelmi of St. Louis, an accountant and financial consultant with a passion for state parks; and Jessi Perry of La Plata, an educator with previous experience in Missouri State Parks. Long-time director Darwin Hindman was elected honorary director.

Recent State Park Retirees

Several people well known to MPA have recently retired from Missouri State Parks. **David Lako**, a stalwart of the operations division for decades, is best known to MPA members as the grand chef of open barbeque and Dutch-oven cooking at many state park special events. **Jerry Toops** retired as superintendent of Battle of Athens State Historic Site, but was perhaps best known to MPA during his years as superintendent at Taum Sauk Mountain and Johnson's Shut-ins State Parks. And **John Cuning** retired as director of the new Cultural Resource Management program, but was best known to many for his first person portrayals of notable Missourians at state park events and his presentations at MPA meetings (see the cultural resource article in this issue of *Heritage*). They each exemplify the extraordinary devotion to the system and its visitors that makes Missouri State Parks so special, and we wish them well in retirement.

Save the Date! Member Meetup

Join MPA on April, 27, 2019 for a fun day of learning and recreation at Thousand Hills State Park, Kirksville, MO.

More information about the event will be available at missouriparksassociation.org



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Meet Your Missouri State Parks Team:

by Sue Holst

Dave Witthaus—Maintenance Worker, Deutschheim SHS

If you have been in numerous state parks and historic sites throughout Missouri, you have probably seen the handiwork of Dave Witthaus.

Witthaus has worked for State Parks for almost 27 years and the majority of it was as a construction worker and construction supervisor. He has worked in almost every unit in the system. His handiwork can be seen in the boardwalks at Rock Bridge, Trail of Tears and Johnson's Shut-Ins State Parks. He also helped renovate the cabins at Meramec State Park.

Three years ago, Witthaus decided to make a change – a change that let him come home and use his expertise in a different way. Witthaus became the maintenance worker at Deutschheim State Historic Site in Hermann, a town that reflects the daily life and traditions of German immigrants to Missouri in the mid-19th century.

A lifelong resident of Hermann, Dave's move lets him stay home with his family instead of traveling all over the state. It was made possible when his brother Bob retired as maintenance worker at Deutschheim.

As a maintenance worker, he is responsible for taking care of the five historic buildings that make up the site. Today, many of his projects

involve restoring historical buildings instead of building new structures. Working on historical projects takes different skills but Witthaus says he has learned through many years of



experience and “by duplicating what was there before.” He also learned many of the skills he uses now from his brother Bob.

Recently, his main project is getting the three-story Tidwell House ready so it can be the historic site's main office while keeping it historically correct. This has included redoing all the windows. A special project has been rebuilding an unusual pocket window,

which included replacing and rebuilding the rotten frames and sashes. This was a case where Witthaus “duplicated what was there before.”

The windows were all replaced with historically correct windows. Some of the old window panes were already on site and some of the window panes were from older homes in Hermann that had been replaced with newer windows. In many cases, the panes had to be cut to fit the window openings in the Tidwell House. That's where the glass cutter was useful. “We have a lot of tools like a glass cutter that are handy for redoing windows. If you have the right kind of tool, it makes everything so much easier,” he says.

“I enjoy working at the site because there is always something different to do. It's never boring,” he says. A recent new project is the four-square garden, which includes heirloom vegetables and herbs and spices. This type of garden reflects what would have been typical in the mid-19th century.

Witthaus and his wife Sheila have three children, JD, Kristin and Paige, as well as two grandchildren, Makenna and Reed. For Witthaus, Deutschheim offers an interesting job and an ideal location, making it the perfect fit.