

SYLVAN SPRINGS PARK

PARK HISTORY

Originally known as Rock Springs, this was the site of the first bivouac at Jefferson Barracks. A temporary camp was established on July 10, 1826, by four companies of the First U.S. Infantry Regiment under the command of Major Stephen Watts Kearny. It was named Cantonment Adams, in honor of President John Quincy Adams. In September of that year, a more permanent camp was started upstream along the Mississippi. This new post was called Jefferson Barracks in honor of Thomas Jefferson, who had died just six days prior to Kearny's arrival at Sylvan Springs.

This portion of the Barracks remained largely unused until 1939, when the spring area was improved by the 6th Infantry with stone retaining walls and terraces. Two years later enlisted men from Jefferson Barracks cleared underbrush, and built an amphitheater, a dance floor, and baseball and football fields. The USO hosted many shows here, the first being June 28, 1941. Among the well-known performers over the following years were Virginia Mayo, fan dancer Sally Rand, Jeanette MacDonald and Judy Garland. The USO bandshell was removed from the park in the 1970s.

The Sylvan Springs property was conveyed to the County from the Federal Government in 1950 and was dedicated on October 23, 1954. It was one of the most popular parks for many years. Each May the Main parking lot at Ordinance Shelter becomes the site of numerous school and corporate picnics. Beginning in 1964, carnival rides are offered during that season. In 1965, St. Louis businessman Howard C. Ohlendorf gave the carousel from the old Forest Park Highlands Amusement Park to the County. The carousel operated at Sylvan Springs from 1966 until 1979.

The Bi-State Development Corporation created a parking lot at Sylvan Springs in 1981. The County Transit Fund contributed \$50,000 and Parks allowed the lot to be used for commuter parking.

WOLSCHLAGER SHELTER

Clarence Wohlschlager first worked for St. Louis County as a constable, from 1943 to 1947. After a three-month stint with the County Housing Authority, Wohlschlager became a park employee in November,

1947. He retired in February, 1969 and died in September 1976. A shelter at Sylvan Springs Park has been named for him.