

## **SPANISH LAKE PARK**

### **PARK HISTORY**

By the exploration of Marquette and Joliet (1673) and LaSalle and DeTonty (1682), France claimed all lands west of the Mississippi River. In 1764 France lost the Seven Years War in Europe and the French and Indian War in America. The French ceded Canada to England, but in the treaty of Fontainebleau ceded lands west of the Mississippi to Spain.

In 1767 Spanish troops and workmen under Captain Francisco Rui entered Louisiana with orders from the King to build two forts at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. The sites proposed were unsuitable because of swamps and flooding, so one temporary fort was built called "Don Carlos el Senor Principe de Asturias," after the King's eldest son. Troops from the fort fished at Spanish Lake and Spanish Governor Zenon Trudeau is said to have had a home at the lake. Hazekiah Lark was a large landowner around the fort and lake area.

In 1780, Indians attacked the City of St. Louis, so the fort was moved to the City, and Fort San Carlos was abandoned. In 1803, the United States bought Louisiana for \$15 million from France. William Henry Harrison took official control. Fort Belle Fontaine was built in the area as a trading post for the Indians. Bellefontaine Road was a road from the City to the fort and farming area. Jacques St. Vrain, brother of Charles DeLassus, the last commandant of St. Louis, was given a grant for the land to the east of the lake, where he kept cattle.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a private clubhouse was built for fishermen from the City. In 1911 it was estimated that 8,000 to 11,000 fishermen came to Spanish Lake.

In 1928 William Heckman bought Spanish Pond for Eldorado subdivision. At that time the roads were still stone. The name was changed from Spanish Pond to Spanish Lake at that time for promotional ~~commercial~~ purposes. The lake remained under private ownership until it was purchased with 1969 Bond Issue funds for \$1.2 million, \$600,000 federal L&WCF and \$600,000 County funds. The park thus became a Land & Water Park and is subject to all Section 6(f) restrictions. The park opened in April of 1971 and was officially dedicated in October of 1971. The Department finished a dredging

project in 1982 that removed 200,000 cubic yards of sediment from the lake.

Fourteen acres of land were added to the park in 1986. 1986 Bond Issue funds were used to construct the Manny Broadway Shelter and a new maintenance building. In the early 1990s the lake was dredged again, and it is now managed, along with the accessible dock, by the Missouri Department of Conservation under the Community Assistance Program. In 2001 the Cardinal Care program constructed "Spirit Field," an accessible baseball field, in the upper part of the park.

### **MANNY BROADWAY SHELTER**

Emmanuel "Manny" Broadway served as an administrator in the Department of Parks & Recreation from the late 1970s to about 2000. The shelter at Spanish Lake Park was renamed for him upon his retirement. Broadway was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. In 1955, he became one of the first African Americans, perhaps the first, to join the Green Berets, the elite and covert U. S. army group. He served for 21 years, including missions to the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Korea and Vietnam.

### **O'MARA SHELTER**

Longtime County Councilman, serving from September 6, 1990 until he retired in 2000. He was succeeded in office by his son Mike O'Mara.

### **ST.VRAIN SHELTER**

Jacques St. Vrain was born in Hainault, France in 1770, and came to Louisiana in 1793, one year after his father, Pierre DeHault DeLassus de Luziere. He served in the French navy prior to the French Revolution, and as captain of the militia after his move here. In 1796 he married Marie Felicite in St. Louis, and they had ten or eleven children. St. Vrain had many land claims under the Spanish government, many of which were not confirmed by the U. S. commissioners. Some of the land that he owned was along Columbia Bottoms Road and south of the convergence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. In addition, he owned the land surrounding Spanish Lake, where his cattle grazed. He died on his farm in 1818. Today a shelter at Spanish Lake Park had been named in his honor.

