

JOE WEBB PEOPLES



"Joe Webb Peoples, an emeritus professor at Wesleyan University who was instrumental in the establishment of Dinosaur State Park in Rocky Hill, died March 21 (2000) at age 92. He was a long-time resident of Middletown, then of Middle Haddam and most recently of Chester.

Professor Peoples joined the faculty of Wesleyan in 1935 as chair of the geology department, a position he held until his retirement in 1975.

His work on strategically important chromite deposits in Montana led him to full-time engagement in the war-effort during 1940-45 at the U.S. Geological Survey, where he was named assistant chief geologist in

1944.

At the conclusion of the war he returned to Wesleyan and was named George I. Seney Professor of Geology. In 1946 he was made a commissioner of the Connecticut State Geological and Natural History Survey, and in 1960 he became director of that organization.

He worked again for the federal government in 1955-57 while on leave from Wesleyan when he joined the International Cooperation Administration to train geologists in the Philippines and map chromite deposits in that country.

Through his work with the Connecticut State Geological Survey, he assured that dinosaur tracks discovered on state property in 1967 were not destroyed for planned development. He was instrumental in establishing educational programs about the tracks, founded the Friends of Dinosaur Park Association, and encouraged the federal government to declare the area a Natural National Historic Landmark.

A 30-foot mural of a Triassic-era scene is dedicated to him for his "invaluable efforts" in the creation and development of the park.

"One of Joe's greatest abilities was to get people to work together on large projects such as the preservation of the dinosaur trackway at Rocky Hill," said Peter Patton, professor of earth and environmental studies and vice president at Wesleyan. "Less well known, but in many regards more important, is the instrumental role he played in forging collaborations between the Connecticut State Geological and Natural History Survey, the U.S. Geological Survey and university geologists to compile the new geologic map of Connecticut published in 1985."

Peoples was active in Middletown government as a member of the Planning and Zoning Commission. He also helped East Hampton create a new sewage disposal system.

Born in 1907 in Springfield, Tenn., he graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1928 and obtained a doctoral degree from Princeton University in 1932.