

DRAFT

February 26, 1999

Project Description
for

Comments see pg 3

"Mission 66":

Contextual History of National Park Service Planning, Design, and Construction, 1945-1972

Comments ←

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National Park Service
Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes Program
Washington, D.C.

DENVER: CCC No Names - 303-969-2354

Focus on Register Eligibility

Review of Staff

Recommended:

Randall J. Biallas
Chief Historical Architect
Date: _____

① Visitor Centers

② Context for "66" 3 year started Nov

⊛

Advisory Comm.

NR/NHL

out of scope

Recommended:

Dwight T Pitcaithley
Chief Historian
Date: _____

Approved:

Katherine H. Stevenson, Associate Director,
Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships
Date: _____

Summary

"Mission 66: Contextual History of National Park Service Planning, Design, and Construction, 1945-1972" will provide an initial objective basis for assessing the significance of national park developed areas and buildings of this period. This project will be in two parts: a one-year study of park visitor centers, and a more general three-year study that will address park roads, housing, developed areas, master planning, and designed landscapes of the period. The shorter study will provide a more intensive look at a specific group of park visitor centers; the longer, more general context study will examine Mission 66 landscape architecture, planning, and architecture in the overall context of the history of national park planning and contemporary trends in American planning and architecture. Together, these products should provide a reliable contextual history to be the basis of more objective discussions and determinations of significance for the built facilities and designed landscapes of this period.

*What about
context
of tourism,
post-war
economics
& leisure*

The goals of the overall project are to examine and document Mission 66 buildings and designed landscapes and to put Mission 66 park development in the larger context of contemporary planning and design in the United States. The products of the study will include two publishable manuscripts. A National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form will be produced, allowing parks to easily nominate their resources. Some properties identified by either study may be nominated as National Historic Landmarks. Other products of the study will include an "indicative list" of resources of particular significance, presentations to interested groups, conference lectures, seminar papers, and publishable articles.

I. Introduction

"Mission 66" was a National Park Service design and construction program intended to revitalize the national parks through a massive, 10-year program of capital investment. The built infrastructure of the national park system seriously deteriorated during World War II, when funding for maintenance was at very low levels. Visitation during the war was also low, but it dramatically increased in the postwar period. As unprecedented crowds poured into the parks in the postwar period, the inadequacy of poorly maintained and aging facilities became glaringly apparent as interpretive facilities, campgrounds, hotel accommodations, roads, and sanitary facilities were overwhelmed. Increased appropriations to handle the crisis, however, were not forthcoming from Congress, which was preoccupied by other issues, including the postwar housing shortage and the Korean War. Park Service director Newton B. Drury had brilliantly defended the parks from opportunistic wartime proposals to log and mine park resources; but following the war he proved less effective in securing substantial appropriations for park maintenance and development of new facilities.

In 1951, Drury was replaced by Conrad L. Wirth, a Park Service landscape architect who had been in charge of the recreational planning and state park development efforts of the Park Service in the 1930s. Unlike Drury, Wirth was a career national park planner and a consummate Washington bureaucrat. Nevertheless, increased funding for improved roads and visitor facilities

at first eluded Wirth, as well. Even after the Korean War ended in 1953, Park Service appropriations did not come close to increasing at the rate park visitation was expanding. By 1955, visitation had tripled from prewar levels to about 55 million visits annually; the 1955 Park Service appropriation of about \$35 million, however, was actually \$1 million less than the amount Congress dedicated to national parks in 1940. The situation continued to deteriorate. Developed areas in many parks were overcrowded by people, cars, and by thousands of new camping trailers, an increasingly popular means of camping. Campground facilities were often inadequate and unsanitary. Families of park employees were housed in tiny cabins and even in tents. As had been the case early in the century, inadequate facilities combined with a large increase in the number of visitors threatened to do great harm to park resources. By 1953, the press was describing the condition of the parks as a national scandal. Magazines and newspapers ran feature stories on the "shumlike" conditions in the parks, and one influential writer suggested that if the parks could not be properly maintained, they should be closed before any further damage was done.

Both Congress and the Eisenhower administration seemed to show little interest in the plight of the national parks at first, but by the middle of 1955 the tide was turning. Sensing his time had arrived, Conrad Wirth mobilized the Park Service staff and assembled an ambitious planning, design, and construction program that he named, "Mission 66." The 10-year program was intended to revitalize, modernize, and enlarge the park system in time for the Park Service's 50th anniversary in 1966. Rather than attempting to finance individual park construction projects on a year-to-year basis, Wirth proposed a multi-million dollar, multi-year construction program that would involve hundreds of individual buildings, road improvements, and park system expansion. By assembling all these projects into one funding proposal, he hoped to put his park construction program on the same footing as the huge dam and highway construction programs that Congress regularly approved. In an era of huge federal public works projects (including the Interstate Highway Act, also approved in 1956) Wirth succeeded in securing major appropriations by packaging national park development along the same lines.

Over the following 10 years (according to Wirth's own figures) \$622,833,000 was spent to build 114 new park "visitor centers," 743 single and double housing units, 496 multiple houses, 221 administration buildings, 36 service buildings, and 584 comfort stations. Hundreds of miles of roads were constructed or widened. The park system was greatly expanded, especially in the new "recreational" categories of national seashores and national recreation areas. Many parks that had been acquired during the New Deal era but had never developed were completed with Mission 66 funds. Funds were made available for the acquisition of inholdings and other property. By the time he retired in 1964, Wirth had overseen a second comprehensive park development campaign almost as impressive as the expansion of the park system under Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Mission 66 also inspired criticism from park advocates and environmentalists who feared that too many highways were being widened, too many new areas were being opened to development, and finally, that the aesthetic quality of Mission 66 design did not meet the high standards of earlier eras of national park development. Many established assumptions of national park planning and management were shifting by the early 1960s. By the time Conrad Wirth retired in

1964, public opinion demanded that the Park Service more carefully protect its wilderness areas and more critically examine proposed construction projects which threatened to over develop parks. But no one could argue with the fact that better public facilities were needed in many parks. George B. Hartzog, Jr., Wirth's successor as Park Service director, continued and completed the Mission 66 program, and followed it with a similar effort, called "Parkscape," to meet the public's need for an expanded national park system. Parkscape was scheduled for completion in 1972, the Yellowstone centennial, and will be included in this contextual study.

How?
or much?

By 1972, the year Hartzog retired, the federal administration of natural resources had been profoundly changed by new public attitudes and congressional legislation. The environmental movement had assumed political influence, and a flurry of new laws permanently changed the administrative and political contexts for national park management. Congress passed the Wilderness Preservation System Act in 1964, and between 1965 and 1969 it passed the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. The position of the Park Service in the new political and legal order had been altered, as well. Hartzog's successor in 1972 was a political appointee who, unlike any previous Park Service director, had no professional background in park management. A new era had begun at the National Park Service.

II. Management Objectives and Description of Study

The capital improvements constructed during the Mission 66 and Parkscape programs are now 25 to 40 years old. Some of the facilities from this era have been heavily used over the last decades, and some have suffered from lack of maintenance and structural damage. Others have proven to be costly to maintain, because of energy inefficiency or design flaws. In some cases, it has even been suggested that the Modernist-inspired park architecture of the period is stylistically inappropriate for national park settings, or that facilities were obtrusively sited in park landscapes. In any case, park managers have begun to propose alteration and replacement of Mission 66 buildings at an accelerating rate. Discussions concerning significance of park development of this period have not always been objective, in part because no contextual study on the Mission 66 and Parkscape programs (or on the individual buildings and their architects) has been completed.

"Mission 66: Contextual History of National Park Service Planning, Design, and Construction, 1945-1972" will be in two parts: a one-year study that will examine a specific group of park visitor centers; and a three-year study that will address a broader range of park roads, housing, developed areas, master planning, and designed landscapes of the period. The three-year study will also incorporate material on visitor centers from the one-year study. Two publishable manuscripts will result from the overall study, which together will provide an initial framework for making objective decisions on the significance of national park development of this era.

The three-year study on Mission 66 planning, design, and construction will be structured around significant examples of Mission 66 landscape development and individual architectural designs. The study will better establish this era of national park development in the overall history of

landscape architecture, planning, and design. The three-year study will emphasize Mission 66 in the context of contemporary planning and design in the United States, including important influences such as the development of the Interstate Highway system, the rise of the International Style in corporate and residential architecture, and the evolution of the professions of landscape architecture, planning, and architecture. The study will also address other types of Park Service architectural design of the period, especially visitor accommodations, park housing, maintenance facilities, service stations, and comfort stations. Park village planning, road and trail design, and overall master planning of the period will be examined as well. The three-year study will include an indicative list of particularly significant examples of park facilities developed during this period, as well as a contextual statement and a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. The resulting manuscript and form will build on the recently completed National Historic Landmark theme study, "Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service" which covered the years 1917 to 1941.

Certain aspects of the architectural history of Mission 66, however, must be addressed on an accelerated schedule because of immediate management and preservation concerns. As a complement and component of the overall study, an architectural historian has already begun the one-year study and documentation of the most important architectural works of the period: park visitor centers. The resulting manuscript for this part of the study will consist of a contextual background on Mission 66 visitor centers, as well as a series of detailed essays and descriptions of five specific visitor centers. The completed result of this work will be available within one year for use in assessing the historical significance and integrity of these buildings and other Mission 66 buildings. The research done for this one-year project will also be incorporated into the longer, three-year contextual study of Mission 66 planning, design, and construction.

Some properties identified by either study may be nominated as National Historic Landmarks. The decision which if any properties to nominate will not be made until the resulting studies have had peer and management review.

With the completion of the one-year and three-year studies, two publishable manuscripts will be available to historians as well as park planners and managers: the shorter, more intensive look at park visitor centers, and a longer, more general context that will examine Mission 66 landscape architecture, planning, and architecture in the overall context of the history of national park planning and design and contemporary trends in American planning and architecture. Together, these products should provide a reliable contextual history to be the basis of more objective discussions and determinations of eligibility for the built facilities and landscapes of this period.

III. Methodology

One-year visitor center study:

The visitor centers to be examined in the one-year study are:

1. **Visitor Center and Cyclorama, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, PA; Richard Neutra & Robert Alexander, Los Angeles, CA, architects, 1958-1962**
2. **Painted Desert Community, Petrified Forest National Park, AZ; Richard Neutra & Robert Alexander, architects, 1958-1963**
3. **Visitor Center, Wright Brothers National Memorial, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Manteo, NC; Mitchell, Cunningham & Giurgola, architects, 1957-1958**
4. **Headquarters Building, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, CO; Taliesin Associated Architects, 1964-1966**
5. **Quarry Visitor Center, Dinosaur National Monument, Dinosaur, CO; Anshen and Alien, San Francisco, CA, architects, 1956-1957**

These buildings have been selected for closer examination because of the prominence of the architectural firms involved and the significance of their work, both in the context of Mission 66 and the history of American architecture. The importance of Park Service architects in developing the visitor center type and in collaborating with private firms will be an ongoing theme throughout the report.

Essays on these buildings will include contextual information based on analysis of historical records such as original drawings, contemporary photographs, newspaper accounts, other archival material, and oral history interviews (when possible). The structures will be described as built, as well as in their current state. Plans of each building will be incorporated into the text.

Additionally, at the end of the one-year study one or more of the visitor centers may be nominated as National Historic Landmarks. The decision which if an visitor centers to nominate will not be made until the study has had peer and management review.

Three-year contextual study:

FY 1998

Archival and library research in Denver; survey of all relevant secondary sources and literature; research will make use of Park Service resources, such as the Cultural Resources Management Bibliography, the DSC Technical Information Center, as well as other local research centers. An initial bibliography of secondary sources will be developed.

Products of this phase:

1. **Draft bibliography of secondary and archival sources.**
2. **Research performed in Denver and in regional archives on Mission 66 facilities and**

context.

FY 1999

System Support Office historians, historical landscape architects, and historical architects will be consulted by mail and telephone. State Historic Preservation Offices will be contacted. A preliminary list of important historic park designs will be prepared at this time, based on advice from park service personnel familiar with regional cultural resources, suggestions from SHPOs, and the results of research.

Good

Field trips will be made to important national and regional depositories, libraries, and collections with information on national park development of this period. The emphasis of these early trips will be on research, interviewing System Support Office historians, and visiting regional archives in order to maximize the efficiency of later site visits. Approximately four of these trips, of one week to ten days apiece, will be required during this time period. This regional work will be necessary for the further development of the thematic context.

An advisory committee will be recruited at this time. This group of professionals and academics will consist of experts inside and outside the Park Service. They will be asked to review and comment on various important steps in the project. Also during this period, articles will be written and lectures given as the opportunities arise. This will be another valuable way of gaining advice, insights, and suggestions from individuals who may be interested in this project.

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Good

Products of this phase:

1. Comprehensive bibliography of secondary and archival sources.
2. Interviews with historians and other contacts.
3. A preliminary indicative list of park buildings and designed landscapes potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
4. Research performed in Denver and in regional archives on Mission 66 facilities and context.
5. Conference lecture, seminar paper, and/or publishable article.

FY 2000

Site visits to designed landscapes and buildings that will be featured in contextual study. Park archives and records will be consulted. Documentation of featured properties will include black and white photographs, color slides, and reproduction of original design drawings (when available).

Products of this phase:

1. Development of "indicative list" of Mission 66 properties potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
2. Draft of thematic context essay for review by peer review panel.
3. Presentations on results of study to interested groups.
4. Conference lecture, seminar paper, and/or publishable article.

FY 2001

Final preparations for publication deadline. Materials collected and written up to this point will be put into final form for publication.

Products of this phase:

1. Final contextual study manuscript, ready for publication.
2. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, allowing parks to easily nominate their resources.
3. Final "indicative list."
4. Conference/Seminar on Mission 66 (co-sponsored by NPF, AIA, NEA, or other group).
5. Student Seminar/VIP project assembling "Design Portfolio" of Mission 66 standard details and building types (an "Albert Good" for Mission 66).

FY 2002

After peer and management review of the study a decision will be made on which if properties to nominate as National Historic Landmarks.

Products of this phase:

1. National Historic Landmark nomination forms.
2. Presentation of the nominations to the Secretary of the Interior's National Park System Advisory Board and National Historic Landmark Committee.

IV. Cooperating Entities

The cooperating groups working on this project will include a wide variety of National Park Service staff, state historic preservation officers, and others both in Washington and regionally. Especially important are: Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes Program, Washington; Park History Program, Washington; historians, historical landscape architects, historical architects in all System Support Offices; State Historic Preservation Officers. Grants will be sought through the NPS National Center for Preservation Technology and Training and other programs.

V. Schedule, Budget, and Staffing

The budget for the project will involve personnel, travel, and publication expenses.

FY 1998

Salary of GS-11 Architectural Historian	\$44,000
Salary of GS-12 Historical Landscape Architect	\$21,000
Travel and Miscellaneous	\$7,000
Total	\$72,000

FY 1999

Salary of GS-11 Architectural Historian	\$26,000
Salary of GS-12 Historical Landscape Architect	\$48,000
Travel and Miscellaneous Expenses	\$12,000
Total	\$86,000

FY 2000

Salary of GS-12 Historical Landscape Architect	\$73,000
Travel and Miscellaneous Expenses	\$11,000
Publication Expenses for one-year study	\$10,000
Total	\$94,000

FY 2001

Salary of GS-12 Historical Landscape Architect	\$75,000
Travel and Miscellaneous Expenses	\$12,000
Total	\$87,000

FY 2002

Salary of GS-12 Historical Landscape Architect	\$26,000
Travel and Miscellaneous Expenses	\$4,000
Publication Expenses for three-year study	\$15,000
Total	\$45,000

Total Cost	\$384,000
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