

HISTORY COLORADO

COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES NOMINATION FORM

SECTION I

Name of Property

Historic Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

Other Names Navajo Hill Visitor Center, Building 181

Address of Property

[] address not for publication

Street Address Milepost 15.8, Park Entrance Road

City Mesa Verde

County Montezuma

Zip 81330

Present Owner of Property

(for multiple ownership, list the names and addresses of each owner on one or more continuation sheets)

Name National Park Service (Cliff Spencer, Superintendent)

Address P.O. Box 8

Phone (970) 529-4465

City Mesa Verde

State CO

Zip 81330

Owner Consent for Nomination

(attach signed consent from each owner of property - see attached form)

Preparer of Nomination

Name Astrid Liverman, Ph.D.

Date June 2018

Organization National Park Service

Address 12795 W. Alameda Parkway, Suite 370

Phone (303) 987-6690

City Denver

State CO

Zip 80228

FOR OFFICIAL USE:

Site Number 5MT.22338

6/1/2018 Nomination Received

9/21/2018 Review Board Recommendation


Approval Denial

9/26/2018

HC Board State Register Listing

Approved Denied

Listing Criteria A B C D E

Certification of Listing:  Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, HISTORY COLORADO

9/27/18 Date

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SECTION II

Local Historic Designation

Has the property received local historic designation?

no

yes --- individually designated designated as part of a historic district

Date designated _____

Designated by _____ (Name of municipality or county)

Use of Property

Historic Visitor Center

Current vacant

Original Owner National Park Service

Source of Information National Park Service, Western Office of Design and Construction

Year of Construction ca. 1965-1967

Source of Information National Park Service, Western Office of Design and Construction

Architect, Builder, Engineer, Artist or Designer Joseph and Louise Marlow with interior work by Alder Rosenthal Architects and oversight provided by the National Park Service Western Office of Design; H.R. McBride, contractor

Source of Information National Park Service (Technical Information Center); Mesa Verde National Park Archives

Locational Status

Original location of structure(s)

Structure(s) moved to current location

Date of move _____

SECTION III

Description and Alterations

(describe the current and original appearance of the property and any alterations on one or more continuation sheets)

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SECTION IV

Significance of Property

Nomination Criteria

- A** - property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to history
- B** - property is connected with persons significant in history
- C** - property has distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or artisan
- D** - property is of geographic importance
- E** - property contains the possibility of important discoveries related to prehistory or history

Areas of Significance

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/ Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Heritage | <input type="checkbox"/> Military |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Exploration/ Settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing Arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Geography/ Community Identity | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Politics/ Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Planning and Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Health/Medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Social History |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |

Significance Statement

(explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Bibliography

(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

SECTION V

Locational Information

Lot(s) N/A Block N/A Addition N/A

USGS Topographic Quad Map Point Lookout, COLO., 1965, Photoinspected 1973

Verbal Boundary Description of Nominated Property

(describe the boundaries of the nominated property on a continuation sheet)

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SECTION VI

Photograph Log for Black and White Photographs

(prepare a photograph log on one or more continuation sheets)

SECTION VII

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS TO ACCOMPANY NOMINATION

Owner Consent Form

Black and White Photographs

Color Prints or Digital Images

Sketch Map(s)

Photocopy of USGS Map Section

Optional Materials

Use of Nomination Materials

Upon submission to the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, all nomination forms and supporting materials become public records pursuant to CRS Title 24, and may be accessed, copied, and used for personal or commercial purposes in accordance with state law unless otherwise specifically exempted. History Colorado may reproduce, publish, display, perform, prepare derivative works or otherwise use the nomination materials for History Colorado and/or State Register purposes.

For Office Use Only

Property Type: building(s) district site structure object area

Architectural Style/Engineering Type: Modern Movement

Period of Significance: ca. 1965-1970

Level of Significance: Local State National

Multiple Property Submission: n/a

Acreage 3.7

P.M. NM Township 35 N Range 15 W Section 27 Quarter Sections NW, SW

UTM Reference: Zone 12 Easting 721897 Northing 4126388 NAD83

Site Elevation: 8.056 feet

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DESCRIPTION and ALTERATIONS

Site and Associated Landscape

The Far View Visitor Center is located near the center of Mesa Verde National Park at Navajo Hill, or approximately Mile Post 15.8 (approximately half-way along the paved main park access road) along the Park Entrance Road in Montezuma County, Colorado. The nominated property includes the following contributing resources: parking lot (structure); site; flagpole (object); and visitor center (building). The area comprises land withdrawn by the United States for park use in 1906 (see attached legislation and map).

The property is bisected by Park Entrance Ruins Road with pedestrian access from the parking lot on the north side of the road provided via an underpass to a circular entry plaza with a flagpole to the south. The underpass approach consists of two long ramps of large aggregate concrete (one to the east and one to the west) with simple railings that slope down from the far end on either side of the parking lot. The effect of these ramps appears monumental, leading to the short, unarticulated tunnel passage, which gives onto the entry plaza (described below).

The parking lot itself consists of four rows of parking divided by a narrow barbell median. The overall configuration is a U-shape. The parking in the north two rows is diagonal. The north row of the lower two features five diagonal spaces, while the remainder of parking in these two rows is straight in. The parking lot configuration remains as it was originally, based on historic aerial photography from June 26, 1965.¹ This parking configuration, including bulbouts, pathways, and orientation, as well as the circular welcome plaza and service road to the south of Park Entrance Ruins Road are all recognizable in the contemporary site plan dated August 1963.²

The entry plaza is paved in tan large aggregate concrete with low coursed ashlar sandstone knee walls and planters. The entry plaza contains a water fountain, phone kiosk, and magnetic message board in addition to the flagpole. These components are considered small-scale contributing site features. From the entry plaza, a tan large aggregate concrete ramp with simple railings (described below) extends up to the east side of the circular visitor center to wrap around to its south side to serve as a viewing platform and rear main entrance on the canyon side. This entrance faces southeast.

From the entry plaza, the two stories of the building appears somewhat muted due to the monolithic mass of the cantilevered upper story, devoid of fenestration and covered in coursed ashlar sandstone. On closer examination, however, the strong structure of the lower level support is apparent, but purposely deemphasized by the use of ash-colored brick facing laid in a common course.

¹ Continental Engineers, Inc., Flight 8, CE790, Obl-8 [aerial photograph], 26 Jun 1965, on file with the Technical Information Center (TIC), National Park Service, Denver, CO.

² National Park Service, Division of Landscape Architecture, Western Office of Design & Construction, *Navajo Hill--Part of the Master Plan, Mesa Verde National Park, Colo.*, NP-MV 3231-G, on file with TIC, National Park Service, Denver, CO. This drawing is annotated as revised through Feb 1965.

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Vegetation around the site are native wildflowers, brush, and shrubs, including Gambel's oak (*Quercus gambelii*), Pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*), Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*), Wild rose (*Rosa woodsii*), Lupine (*Lupinus*, several species), and sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*).³ The most prominent non-native plant seen around Far View Visitor Center and the parking lot is Smooth brome grass (*Bromus inermis*).

The upper level of the building serves the public, comprising the viewing platform, welcome desk, and exhibit space. The lower level includes staff offices and common space, public and staff restrooms, and building utility infrastructure. A short, paved curved service road (original to the design) exists opposite the west exit of the parking lot on the south side of the road and leads down to the east to the lower level of the visitor center on its west side. Below this service road to the south and southeast, the site slopes sharply down towards the canyon.

As described in the recent Historic Structure Report for the visitor center, in the immediate vicinity of the building's lower level the site is paved with concrete along the south side of the lower level.⁴ A 4'-8"-wide concrete walk gives way to a slope to the south, covered with natural vegetation. To the west is a small asphalt paved parking area connected to the building via a paved walk. The walk along the west side is 4'-8" wider [or 9'-4" in total width] than along the other sides of the building. Directly west of the building, there is a 3'-2"-wide, 10'-long concrete ramp. To the north there are 8'-6"-wide concrete slabs adjacent to the building. To the southwest of the men's room door (on the west side lower level) is a white brick site wall and another to the northeast of the women's room door. The original entry sequence from the parking area is intact. This includes a circular concrete plaza with signage, low stone walls, a pedestrian walkway underneath Park Entrance Road, ramps from the pedestrian walkway, and the parking area itself. To the east a concrete ramp accesses the observation deck on the upper level. Beneath the ramp, there is concrete pavement perimeter, with the exception of the area of the utility vault room.

Far View Visitor Center

Far View Visitor Center is a two-story cylindrical building (84' in diameter) constructed of reinforced concrete with some exterior stone veneer and a perimeter ground-floor brick wall.⁵ Of twelve total rooms, the lower level houses several offices, a utility room, and restrooms, while the upper floor functioned to welcome and orient visitors via a lobby and exhibits. The building contains 5745 square feet. The building is constructed around a central cylindrical core column 6' in diameter with beams radiating outward in ten 36-degree increments. Integral floor and roof slabs span between the beams. A ring of reinforced concrete columns support the upper floor. A 10'-wide cantilevered deck wraps around the southern third of the building, accessed by a ramp

³ For a complete list of "Typical Plants along the Roads and Trails of Mesa Verde National Park," see https://www.nps.gov/meve/learn/nature/upload/meve_typical_plants_list_508_01-25-18.pdf (accessed 28 Jun 2018).

⁴ The property site description is derived from Form+Works Design Group, LLC. *Far View Visitor Center, Mesa Verde National Park—Colorado Historic Structure Report*. Prepared for National Park Service. Denver: May 2018. See "Setting & Associated Landscape Features," 16-17. This document should also be consulted for a detailed description of the building's engineering and technical specifications.

⁵ Form+Works Design Group, 22.

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with original railing on the east end. The observation deck extends approximately 19'-7" out from the building wrapping the back half of the building to the east and south. It features large aggregate concrete flooring and 36"-high metal railing. The deck is accessed via ramp that extends straight from the circular plaza and curves around to the back of the building to provide an opening vista to the canyon. A chain link fence affixed to the interior of the railing was installed in 1986 to prevent injury.⁶ At the west end of the building is an exterior cast-in-place concrete stair with a painted metal handrail.⁷

The roof is a reinforced concrete slab (8-1/2" thick) spanning ten reinforced concrete beams radiating from center. At center, the roof thickness is 12-1/2". Although deformed by wind shear, a metal rooftop screen shields mechanical equipment.⁸

As described by architectural historian Christine Madrid French in her 2017 National Historic Landmark Letter of Inquiry for the visitor center,

The modern style and form of the building is highlighted with the addition of natural materials on the north façade of the building. The rock-face complements the surrounding landscape and refers to the historic kiva form construction material present in the significant cultural resources of the park.

The overall landscape and building plans incorporate a series of modernized spaces—replicated in part throughout the parks nationally—to create a reliable, formal model of sequences now familiar to the traveling public: car park, landscaped entry and trails, exhibitions, information, restrooms, and observation. The design is distinctly modern, marked by materials, shape, and a plan that engaged the contemporary visitor. The primary materials are concrete, steel, brick, rock, and glass. Construction of the structure relied on modern methods as well, with a cantilevered concrete ramp and second-story overhang/overlook. The ramp was frequently utilized for modern buildings, particularly those that expected large groupings of people. Visitors naturally spread out along the ramp while entering and exiting the structure, versus gathering and clustering on more traditional stairway entrances. Large areas of glazing allowed the visitor to observe vistas from inside the structure, while the second-story terrace provided outdoor access to expansive views and an overall orientation to the park's resources. (...)

The visitor first sees a framed view of the landscape as they exit the tunnel which connects to the visitor center plaza. A second sequential view occurs as the visitor ascends the ramp that wraps around the building, to reveal a panoramic 180-degree view of the landscape before entering the structure. The building is well-integrated into the landscape with low sandstone retaining walls and walkways directing visitors to adjoining pathways. There are built-in benches on the perimeter of the circular terrace.

⁶ Form+Works Design Group, 41.

⁷ Form+Works Design Group, 41.

⁸ Form+Works Design Group, 33, 43.

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The building is located on a sloping site; the public view from the north side appears to be a single-story elevation, while the south façade drops down to reveal two-stories with a cantilevered deck projecting towards Soda Canyon. Modern design characteristics include large areas of glazing, absence of ornament, prolific use of concrete, a flat roof, and open interior volumes (on the second floor). Exposed, structural, concrete columns support the overhanging second floor, the entry ramp, and the cantilevered observation deck. The second story, north elevation was rendered as an unbroken sandstone surface (rock veneer over concrete), and provided an area for displaying the name of the building to further orient and attract the visitor. Large, steel letters read “Far View Visitor Center” on this façade; the lettering is visible from the road and from the parking area (later adapted to read “Far View Center,” after the closing of the building).

The first story is faced with cream-colored, glazed bricks, shaded by the dramatically cantilevered observation deck above. The interior contains a series of pie-shaped spaces (unevenly distributed in size), housing personnel offices, restrooms, a first aid office, and storage. Spaces around the central column contained utilities. Clerestory windows illuminate the restroom areas and larger areas of glazing bring light into the office spaces. Interior walls are wood, brick, and plaster with vinyl tile floors and acoustical tile ceilings. A series of angled concrete piers supports the second story floorplate and the cantilevered observation deck.

The second story is accessed by a curving concrete ramp that leads to a cantilevered observation deck on the south side of the building. The ramp is supported by a series of concrete piers and a metal railing runs along the length. The deck surface is exposed aggregate concrete. The south façade is comprised of steel windows with three pairs of double doors and large expanses of glass. The concrete columns separate and frame vistas through the windows. Views of prominent park resources from the observation deck include Ute Peak, Tsé Bit’a’l (Rock with Wings) or Ship Rock, Carrizo Mountain, Lukachukai Mountain, Chuska Mountain, and Angel Peak. The interior of the second story is open with a structural column in the center of the building. A 1968 exhibition display and interior construction plan outlined pottery display areas, an anthropology unit, exhibition cases, book vending area, and sales and information desks. A secondary exit via a concrete stairway is tucked inside along the northeastern perimeter of the building. The stairway exits to the outside ground level, beneath the ramp and observation deck.⁹

Alterations and Integrity

Alterations have been relatively few and most do not impact character-defining features, with the notable exception of replacement of full-length windows on the south side and glass exterior doors in 1968, even before the building opened due to the interpretive programming that was planned that year and completed in 1970 for the building opening. The building terrace was slightly

⁹ Christine Madrid French, “National Historic Landmark Letter of Inquiry—Far View Visitor Center, Mesa Verde National Park, Cortez, Colorado,” 31 Dec 2017, on file with the National Park Service, Denver, CO.

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expanded in 1979. A fire suppression system was installed in 1992-3.¹⁰ In 1995, HVAC mechanical systems (not original to the building) were installed (subsequently replaced in 1997).

Madrid French further described:

Additional alterations to the building included removing the original vinyl tile in the second story and replacing it with carpet and ceramic tile (c. 1995); removing original vinyl tile in the first story offices and replacing it with carpet (c. 1995); shortening the partition wing wall to the south of the information desk, which runs towards the retail book area, by four feet (c. 1995); upgrading the sprinkler system (c. 2011); and converting one employee restroom in the first story into a kitchenette by removing the original toilet and sink and adding cabinetry (date unknown). Around 1995, four original exterior aluminum doors were replaced with flush steel doors: the second story, north employee entrance door; the two public restroom doors on the south side of the first story; and the utility area door on the first story.¹¹

Original materials on the interior of the building include the wood wall paneling, acoustic ceiling tiles, exhibit cases, bathroom sinks, bathroom tiles, canister light fixtures, and clock above the main desk. All materials on the exterior of the building are original, apart from the windows and doors as previously mentioned. The original aluminum signage is still on the building, though it has been altered from "FAR VIEW VISITOR CENTER" to "FAR VIEW CENTER." The building also retains its original landscaping features, including the raised sandstone planters, sandstone retaining walls, concrete paths, aluminum flagpole, and concrete tunnel (measuring 9-feet high by 12-feet wide) under the Main Park Road connecting to the visitor center parking lot.¹²

The Far View building served as the park visitor center for over four decades, but was closed in 2012 when its functions were removed to a new Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center at the park's entrance late that year. Park staff maintained offices in the building until 2014, at which time it was mothballed. Overall, the building retains an extremely high degree of historic integrity of materials, workmanship, setting, design, feeling, association, and location. The level of integrity is such that the National Park Service has determined that the property warrants further consideration for National Historic Landmark designation.¹³ The National Historic Landmarks program stipulates that properties retain an extremely high level of historic integrity.

¹⁰ Steve Turner, Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer, communicated at the Colorado Historic Preservation Review Board meeting, 21 Sep 2018.

¹¹ "Park Project/Action Review Form: Farview Visitor Center Carpet Replacement/Tile Installation, Exterior Door Replacement, Project #95-36," in Compliance Files, Barracks #3, Mesa Verde National Park, 29 August 1995.

¹² Madrid French.

¹³ Tom Keohan, Acting Program Manager, Heritage Partnerships Program, to Christine Madrid-French, letter dated 16 Mar 2018.

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SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

Designed by Colorado architects Joseph and Louise Marlow with the input of the National Park Service Western Office of Design and Construction, Far View Visitor Center is nationally significant under Criterion C for Architecture as a circular mid-century Modern Movement design incorporating reference to regional archaeological resources (in particular kivas) as well as design guidelines of the Mission 66 program. The Visitor Center is further significant under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government for its association with the National Park Service's national Mission 66 visitor and building improvement program. The period of significance for both criteria is 1965-1970. Originally known as Navajo Hill Visitor Center after the adjacent landform, the Far View Visitor Center's design was finalized in 1965 (in evolution and planning since 1956), with construction completed in 1967. The building opened to the public in June 1970, three years after its completion. Its conception was part of a National Park Service system-wide effort to modernize the national parks, beginning in 1956 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the agency in 1966, through the program known as MISSION 66 (herein referred to as Mission 66).

As described by Madrid French in her Letter of Inquiry regarding the property's national significance:

The Park Service developed and introduced the building typology of the "visitor center" as an innovative design solution to address critical contemporary requirements at individual sites across the country. Each distinctively modern visitor center demonstrated the new commitment of the Park Service to the management and interpretation of park resources and the accommodation of visitors and personnel. Far View is differentiated from the other examples, however, in that the scale, shape and materials of the traditional Native American kiva form were extrapolated by the architects (from archaeological examples located nearby) to provide a site-specific environmental context for the design that could not be replicated elsewhere. The building design is unique in the method of integrating references to these native structures within the strictures of modernist design and contemporary uses.

The Far View Visitor Center is a critical component of the built landscape sequential narrative and interpretive methodology at Mesa Verde National Park, which includes roadways, orientation and exhibit areas, lodging, and other visitor/employee facilities. This strikingly contemporary building symbolized, for the visiting public and the agency itself, the achievements of the Mission 66 program and a new era for the National Park Service.¹⁴

Mission 66

The history of the Mission 66 program is detailed extensively in the 2015 National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form, *National Park Service Mission 66 Era Resources*, as are the registration requirements for the Mission 66 visitor center typology.¹⁵ Its significance is

¹⁴ Madrid French.

¹⁵ Ethan Carr, Elaine Jackson-Retondo, Ph.D., Len Warner, and the Collaborative, Inc. (Rodd L. Wheaton, John

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summarized in that historic context as follows:

National Park Service Director Conrad L. Wirth recognized that postwar projects in the parks were being funded by various means through regional offices and designed by regional staffs. In order to achieve his vision for service-wide construction goals, he consolidated regional design and construction staffs into two centralized offices in San Francisco and Philadelphia and realigned architects, landscape architects, engineers, and project administration. The Eastern and Western Offices of Design and Construction were established in June 1, 1954, with direct oversight from professional division offices in Washington, D.C. Director Wirth, influenced by the multi-year program of the Federal Highways Administration, began to implement a similar systematic, long-term program for new construction and improvements in the national parks. In 1955, using national park-wide planning proposals, he put forward a ten-year construction program and, with the approval of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, it was embraced by Congress. As envisioned by Wirth and his Washington office staff, the new Mission 66 program, fully underway by 1956, was intended to modernize, enlarge, and even reinvent the National Park System by its 50th anniversary in 1966. Congress indicated a willingness to comply with the over \$700 million budget for the ten-year program. The agency's budget increased for fiscal year 1957 to \$68 million above the \$32 million appropriated in 1955. Further increases led to annual budgets greater than \$100 million by 1962. The planning and policy initiative of the Mission 66 program proved to be the most effective means of increasing National Park Service appropriations since the 1930s. The full historic details of Director Wirth's implementation are detailed in Ethan Carr's book, *Mission 66, Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*, published in 2007.

At the beginning of fiscal year 1956, a large number of projects were planned through park-wide studies and formulated to support the Mission 66 program. These projects were funded and began quickly to demonstrate the efficiency of the National Park Service to manage the ten-year proposal. These initial projects demonstrated the readiness of the agency's centralized planners, architects and landscape architects. Contractual agreements with private design offices supplemented program demands. Most importantly, the Modern Movement style, or Park Service Modern style, was adopted as the premier design idiom. The pre-Mission 66 designs demonstrated the national trend toward Modernism during post-World War II construction. The National Park Service's ten-year Mission 66 program was initiated as the largest construction program to upgrade the parks in the history of the agency.

By 1966, Congress spent about \$1 billion on land acquisition, new staff and training, general operations, and construction activities in national parks. 70 new "units" of the park system were authorized between 1956 and 1966. The National Park Service constructed or reconstructed over 2,700 miles of roads and over 900 miles of trails. Many parks received

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adequate water, sewer, and electric service for the first time. Hundreds of park residences, comfort stations, and other public use property types and park administration were built. The Mission 66 program expanded and professionalized National Park Service employees by establishing two new training centers, the Albright and Mather training centers, for park staff. Above all, the Mission 66 program funded more than 100 visitor centers, a new property type invented by the agency's planners and architects, which were at the heart of the revised park Master Planning goals. Modernist advances in park architecture forged a new identity for the agency. Although the development and redevelopment of national parks at this scale was beset by controversy, by the end of the Mission 66 program, much of what Wirth envisioned was accomplished. The reinvention of the National Park Service—and to some extent the national park idea—met the urgent demands of postwar American society.

From the outset, the Mission 66 program was criticized for emphasizing capital construction, a one-dimensional solution, for complex social and environmental problems that park managers faced. Critics complained that Mission 66 construction abandoned the natural landscape architectural theory and building technology of the Rustic era. Postwar park architecture integrated steel, concrete, prefabricated elements, nontraditional fenestration, climate control, and other aspects of mid-century American architecture. Distinctive new property types emerged from various approaches of postwar modernism to the programmatic and aesthetic requirements of the national parks. New park development included contemporary planning and landscaping to provide naturalistic settings for buildings, roads and trails. For example, the visitor center, a one-stop centralized service center, was accessible to large numbers of people in automobiles. The Interstate Highway system influenced Mission 66 road design and sometimes determined the locations of developed areas to provide easy access for visitors to park facilities. Conservationists generally denounced these changes in the American landscape and saw the results in the national parks' front country as deeply disturbing. The Mission 66 program began in an atmosphere of intense optimism, but the program soon led the National Park Service into bitter controversy as the postwar conservation movement began to organize and exert strength. The Mission 66 program hastened the initiation of environmentalism by igniting genuine concern that the Park Service was overdeveloping parks and failing to take steps to preserve wilderness.

As the Mission 66 program implemented new planning procedures and design concepts, it remained profoundly committed to facilitate public enjoyment of the parks. Wirth continually insisted that the Mission 66 program should be seen as a conservation program and not as a development program that would, ultimately, preserve and not destroy wilderness. Wirth, a landscape architect who worked in the parks in the 1930s, managed Civilian Conservation Corps projects. He firmly believed, along with landscape architect Thomas Vint, that the naturalistic park landscapes should be maintained and reflected in the new architecture. Wirth made clear the idea that "parks were for the people." Preservation outside the context of public enjoyment was simply not what the National Park Service intended to achieve during the Mission 66 program.¹⁶

¹⁶ Carr et. al., E-3-4.

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National Park Visitor Centers

Sarah Allaback's monograph, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, is considered an integral history of the visitor center function and type:

Mission 66 planners coined the term "visitor center" to describe a new building type they developed to serve the vastly increased numbers of people (and their cars) who began visiting the national parks following World War II. The visitor center combined old and new building programs, and it was the centerpiece of a new era in planning for visitor services in American national parks. The influence of the visitor center idea was profound. New visitor centers (and the planning ideas behind them) were used in the development or redevelopment of scores of state parks in the United States, as well as nascent national park systems in Europe, Africa, and elsewhere. The original, finite group of Mission 66 visitor centers therefore became prototypes for a new approach to park planning all over the world.

The visitor center typically is a centralized facility that includes multiple visitor and administrative functions within a single architectural floor plan or compound. The use of the word "center" indicated the planners desire to centralize park interpretive and museum displays, new types of interpretive presentations, park administrative offices, restrooms, and various other visitor facilities. Like the contemporary "shopping center," the visitor centers made it possible for people to park their cars at a central point, and have access to a range of services or attractions. The visitor center facilitated and concentrated public activities, and helped prevent more random, destructive patterns of use.

The more significant examples of visitor center design contributed to the evolution of the museum, as a building type, as had earlier national park museums of the 1920s and 1930s. Some visitor center activities and programs, such as administrative offices and museum displays, had been featured in "park village" developments since the early 1920s, although usually in separate buildings. Other program elements, such as interpretive displays, slide shows, and films, were being developed at the time by National Park Service interpretive planners and museum staff. The term "interpretation" replaced "education" at the National Park Service in the late 1940s, and the new approach was extremely influential on the development of the floor plans, spatial processions, and functional spaces of Mission 66 visitor centers. Theater spaces for new slide shows and 16 mm films soon became standard requirements, as did space for interpretive displays, which either replaced or complemented the more familiar exhibit cases of older park museums. The "information" desk (as opposed to interpretive or museum displays) became an essential and central feature of the new facility, and emphasized rapid and efficient dissemination of practical information related to park attractions, visitor safety, and convenience.

The procession (or sequence of spaces) through a visitor center was a particularly important aspect of its design. Increased numbers of visitors required attention to circulation and visitor "flow." Contemporary modern architectural design stressed procession as an aspect of planning new properties. In Mission 66 visitor centers, the spatial procession through the facility often included wide entrances and exits, ramps and inclined planes, an open lobby,

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easy access to exhibit and auditorium areas, and significant views of natural features or historic sites (either from a terrace or through a window wall) to facilitate interpretive talks.

The siting of visitor centers was determined by new considerations in park master planning that involved the circulation of unprecedented numbers of peoples and cars. The visitor center was an integral part of a new approach to park planning. The new properties were typically sited in relation to the overall circulation plan of the park, in order to efficiently intercept visitor flow at critical points. The criteria for siting Mission 66 visitor centers therefore differed from the criteria for siting and designing the park villages and museums of the prewar era. In larger parks, new visitor centers were often sited at park entrances, or on park roads "en route" to major destinations in the park. In other cases, visitor centers were sited at a major destination or attraction within the park. In some cultural parks, visitor centers were sited as close as possible to the landscape or other resource to be interpreted. This implied a certain amount of encroachment on the park landscape, but it was felt that this provided the most powerful means of interpreting a site that otherwise might remain obscure or less than fully appreciated by park visitors.

Although visitor centers typically were sited in relationship to the park's automotive circulation plan, designers explored the potential for visitors to use nearby trails and outdoor spaces once they were out of their cars. Outdoor amphitheaters, roof terraces, and other exterior features all served as functional parts of the visitor center complex. Many restrooms were designed as separate buildings adjacent to the visitor center, or at least with separate outdoor entrances. Nearby parking lots and site development were integral to the overall procession into and through the building. Ramps often replaced stairs into and out of the building, and window walls helped break down the division between site and interior space. Short interpretive trails ("nature trails") were developed to provide an outdoor experience near the visitor center, and outdoor picnic and sitting areas were common as well.

The Mission 66 visitor center remains today as the most architecturally significant expression of the planning and design practices developed by the National Park Service during the Mission 66 era.¹⁷

Development of a visitor center at Mesa Verde ultimately took several years and multiple design iterations prior to the facility's opening. During the course of planning, in July 1962 Mesa Verde National Park Superintendent Chester A. Thomas communicated to the National Park Service's regional office that archaeological ruins were located within the proposed development at the parking and concession areas. These sites, described as 884 and 885 and identified in the course of construction via monitoring, were recorded over 15 days of salvage excavation, with information on file in the Mesa Verde National Park archives.¹⁸

¹⁷ Sarah Allaback, Ph.D., *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2000), 268-270.

¹⁸ Form+Works Design Group, 11. See also Mesa Verde National Park archives, Chester a. Thomas, Superintendent, to Regional Director, Southwest Region, letter, dated 12 Jul 1962.

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

The Historic Structure Report described the genesis for developing the visitor center as follows:

At Mesa Verde National Park, it was determined that a new Visitor Center, Administrative Building and visitor lodging should be constructed to meet the increasing public demands. A master plan for park visitor services was completed in 1962. As part of this effort Park staff determined that the Visitor Center should be located on top of the mesa on Navajo Hill, while the Administrative Building would be located closer to the park entrance. The primary reason for the separation was to provide visitor orientation service closer to the park resources, which in turn would help park staff regulate crowd volumes at the sites more effectively.

This idea of regulating visitor numbers and spreading visitors and resources throughout the park was a major goal of the MISSION 66 initiative. By the early 1960s visitors to the park averaged 700 cars per hour according to park staff. Navajo Hill was chosen as the location for the Visitor Services since it [sits on] high ground on the mesa and would be highly visible for visitors to orient themselves. NPS records show that park interpreters were disappointed that the highest ground was designated for lodging and concessioner functions while the Visitor Center and its associated orientation activities tucked lower into the hillside. They believed this would be confusing to visitors.

In addition, the original program for the Visitor Center features a spacious orientation room, as well as interpretive spaces, lobby, reception areas and multiple staff offices. Regional staff quickly deemed this plan as “gilding the lily” and deemed the design excessive and outside the established budget. Several Memos [sic] were written between Park, Regional and National level staff debating the appropriate program for the Visitor Center.¹⁹

Architectural and Site Planning and Development

Planning for a visitor center at Navajo Hill began in 1962 with completion of a master plan featuring a more traditional building conceived by John Anderson of Anderson Mason Dale Architects in Denver. Married architects Joseph and Louise Marlow were subsequently selected to work in conjunction with the National Park Service Western Office of Design & Construction on the building’s design.

Madrid French described the construction history in additional detail:

The Park Service maintained two centralized offices of Design and Construction (Eastern and Western) and frequently contracted with private firms to assist with the scope of work required during the height of the Mission 66 program. Architects Joseph Patrick and Louise Marlow (husband and wife specializing in modernist commissions in the Denver area) designed the Far View Visitor Center with the input of the Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC). The architects began planning the building in 1962 in cooperation with Park Service administrators. A “Project Construction Proposal” prepared by Park Superintendent Chester A. Thomas referred to the 9,050-square foot building as “modified

¹⁹ Form+Works Design Group, 6.

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

traditional Mesa Verde Spanish Pueblo,” with a projected budget of \$304,100. The justification for the building stated that the structure was “required to carry out the objectives of MISSION 66 to spread visitor use...It will be the first visitor contact and will serve to orient the visitor to Mesa Verde and to help him to most profitably spend his time...and how to enjoy the park in the time he has.”²⁰

Designers Joseph Patrick Marlow (born 1912, in New York City) and Mary Louise Marlow (born 1916, in Spokane, Washington) met while studying at Washington University in St. Louis. They married in 1940 and are “acknowledged masters of Denver architecture,” whose designs “influenced the local development of the International Style.”²¹ Other modernist works by the Marlows in the Denver area include the Sandler House (1954), Southwest State Bank (1960), and the Lloyd M. Joshel House (1951, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995). In 1953, the design journal *Progressive Architecture* recognized their work in an article about regional modernist buildings. Joseph taught architecture at the University of Denver and the University of Colorado, Boulder. Louise worked as a draftsman for prominent modern architects in the area before the couple started their own practice.

The plan for the Far View Visitor Center was shaped over multiple consultations with the WODC in San Francisco as well as meetings with staff at the park and in Denver. Changes in budget and limitations of the site compelled the architects to alter the first proposal. In 1964, the Marlows delivered alternatives for a structure positioned at the top of the sloping site. The free-standing, flat-roofed, round pavilion was presented with two different ramp styles (with varying north and south facades) and three versions of the interpretive/main floor, two showing an adaptable theater area with flexible functions and a third with an orientation area, lobby, and sales. The first exterior scheme had a switchback ramp that entered on the north side of the building with a landing at the door. The covered observation deck on the south side of the structure was created by pushing back interior spaces from the perimeter edge of the plan circle.

The second (built) plan incorporated a long, semi-circular ramp that starts on the north side of the building, curves around the perimeter of the structure, and flows into the observation deck on the south side façade. The ramp width added to the depth of the observation deck, which is cantilevered beyond the perimeter edge of the plan circle and only partially under cover. The absence of weight bearing walls within the structure permitted changes in use over time and created a more functional interior space with an open volume. The construction contract was signed in 1965 with building completion projected for late June 1966.²²

²⁰ Chester A. Thomas, Superintendent. MEVE, “Project Construction Proposal,” Navajo Hill Visitor Center, 13 Feb 1963.

²¹ Rodd Wheaton, Michael Paglia, and Diane Wray, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: *Lloyd M. Joshel House, Denver, CO* (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, November 1995) 8-5, on file with the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, History Colorado.

²² Chester Thomas, Superintendent, MEVE, to Director, “Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1966,” 14 Jun 1966.

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

The chief park interpreter of Mesa Verde, Jean Pinkley, argued for a change in the interior scope during the planning and construction period. In her opinion, neither scheme presented by the architects fulfilled the purposes behind the visitor center concept under Mission 66: "In both plans the orientation room is eliminated and the electric, employee-operated map is placed in the lobby, defeating the purpose of the device... This Park is an area of irreplaceable resources where visitor use must be controlled. Its features do not interpret themselves. Adequate orientation is requisite to regulated use, interpretation and true visitor enjoyment of Park values." She requested that the visitor center focus solely on orientation, without exhibits or displays.²³ Nonetheless, the building interior initially featured an area for audience presentations and was altered with partitions to incorporate displays and dioramas in 1968.

The design, scale, and location of the building was intended to complement, not dominate, the natural resources of Mesa Verde. The structure illustrates the modern elements dictated by the Mission 66-era design guidelines while integrating symbolic cultural motifs to blend with the landscape and resources unique to the national park. This visitor center is also significant as it is one of only a few Mission 66 projects nationwide that adopted the circular shape. At Mesa Verde, the circular plan and flat roof distill "the essential form and material of a prehistoric Kiva into a distinctly modern structure."²⁴ The unusual, modernist building stood apart from the Pueblo Revival buildings elsewhere in the park. A few months before completion, the superintendent noted that "The New Visitor Center... has created considerable interest from the visitor, because of the circular design."²⁵

The visitor center is a series of concentric circles in plan, moving from a large column at the center, the first-floor footprint, the second floor (which is larger than the first), and the semi-circular shape of the overhanging observation deck and spiraling entry ramp. Additionally, the flat-roof (typical in modernist works) expresses and complements the horizontality of the surrounding mesas. The random rock veneer on the north side of the second floor (facing the Main Park Road/Highway 10) recalls the natural materials and construction methods of the archaeological resources present throughout the park.

The building was completed in April 1967 by H.R. McBride Construction Co., of Farmington, NM. A second completion report, dated 28 Jan. 1971, lists direct costs at \$212,802.50, indirect costs of \$34,047.92, and accumulated costs of \$246,850.42.²⁶

Over 500,000 visitors entered Mesa Verde in 1969.²⁷ After the visitor center's opening in 1970,

²³ Jean Pinkley, Chief Park Interpreter, MEVE, to Superintendent, 8 Jan 1964.

²⁴ Cliff Spencer, Superintendent, MEVE, to Steve Turner, Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer, History Colorado Center, Denver, CO., 12 Oct 2016, "Initiate the Section 106 Process, Far View Visitor Center, Mesa Verde National Park, PEPC #58788" [letter].

²⁵ Superintendent, MEVE, to Director, "Memorandum: Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1966," 14 Jun 1966, 2.

²⁶ Construction Building No. 181, Navajo Hill, constructed under WO X20013, H.R. McBride Construction Co., Farmington, NM. Contract #14-10-0333-1326. Completed 10 Apr 67. Completion report 28 Jan 71, direct costs \$212,802.50, indirect costs \$34,047.92, accumulated costs \$246,850.42. Original cost \$226,358.

²⁷ Duane A. Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

for a number of years shuttle buses ferried visitors to major sites in the park from this location. In September 1968, Alder Rosenthal Architects had developed interior design drawings for interpretive exhibits and visitor services. After decades of use, the building was closed to the public in October 2012. In early 2014; it was mothballed, but is now in the process of being cleaned and evaluated for rehabilitation.

It is anticipated that, with a National Historic Landmark nomination currently under development, additional archival research and analysis will yield even greater detail regarding the history of the Far View Visitor Center, the evolution of its design, and its representation of the Mission 66 program. Among the few other National Park Service Mission 66 visitor centers also featuring circular plans or major design elements, the Quarry Visitor Center at Dinosaur National Monument in Jensen, Utah is a National Historic Landmark, but the circular feature has been demolished. The Visitor Center and Cyclorama Building at Gettysburg National Military Park in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania has been entirely demolished.

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

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Technical Information Center [archives], National Park Service, Denver, CO.

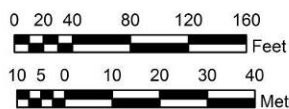
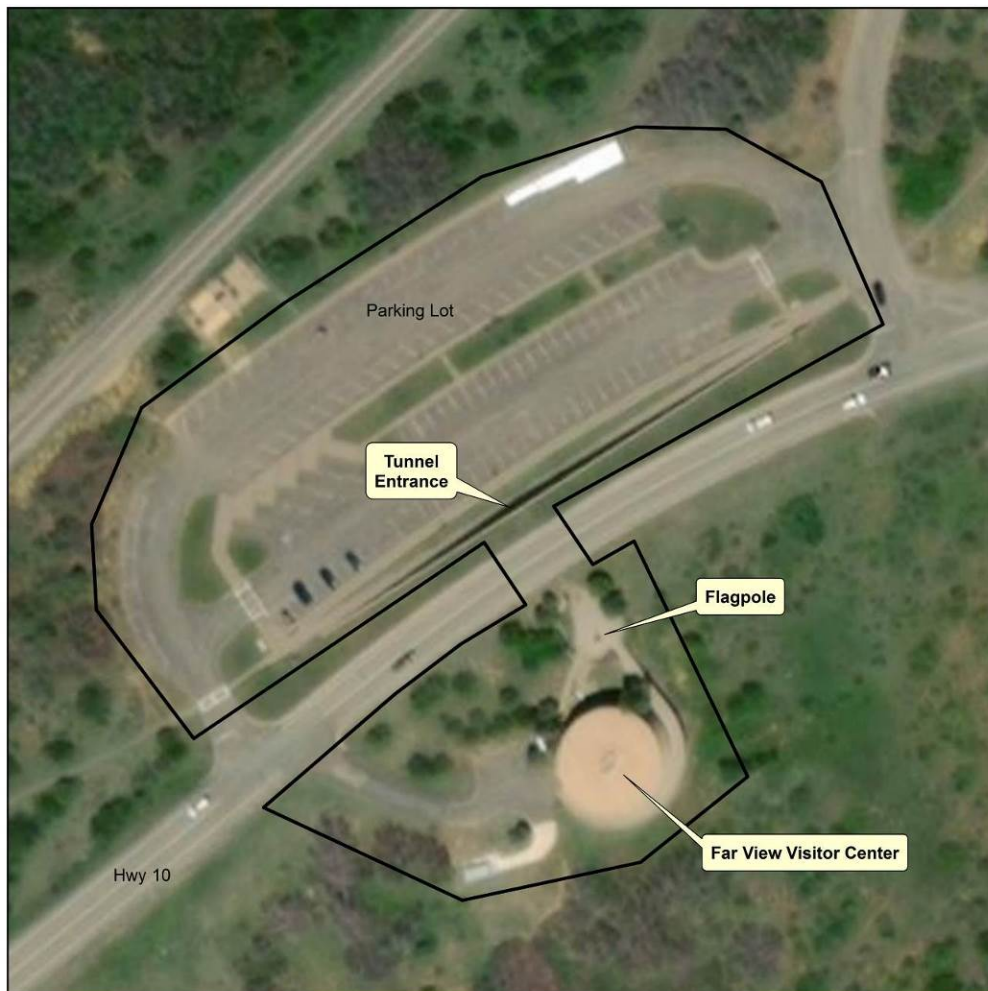
Wirth, Conrad. *Parks, Politics, and the People*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980.


Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The proposed boundary includes the Far View Visitor Center as well as the circular paved courtyard which serves to welcome the visitor via the connection to the building's associated parking area to the northwest underneath Park Entrance Road (State Highway 10). The site thus includes all paved circulation pathways and the vehicle parking that was integral to ferrying increased visitors arriving by car that Mission 66 anticipated. The boundary includes 3.7 acres.



 Far View Visitor Center Property Boundary



June 2018

Universal Transverse Mercator, North American Datum 1983

Produced by Mesa Verde National Park - Map for informational purposes only.

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1- 20 except as noted:

Name of Property: Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

Location: Park Entrance Road, Mesa Verde National Park

Photographer: Jocelyn Iwanczyk

Date of Photographs: June 13, 2016

Negatives: TIFFs on file with the National Park Service

Photo No. Photographic Information

- 1 East side-Overall view of building as approached from Highway 10.
Camera facing southwest.
- 2 North side-View of building from above tunnel entrance. Camera
facing south.
- 3 Ramp descending from the parking lot to the tunnel entrance.
Camera facing northeast.
- 4 Ramp ascending from the tunnel entrance to the parking lot. Camera
facing northeast.
- 5 Tunnel entrance on the north side (parking lot side) of Highway 10.
Camera facing southwest.
- 6 Tunnel entrance on the south side (building side) of Highway 10.
Camera facing northwest.
- 7 Retaining walls, sidewalks and tunnel entrance. Camera facing north.
- 8 North side-Overview of the building as seen when exiting the tunnel.
Camera facing south.
- 10 Stone retaining walls and sidewalk leading to public restrooms.
Camera facing south.
- 11 North side-Detail of lower level. Camera facing southeast.
- 12 West side-detail of the observation deck. Camera facing east.
- 13 South side-Detail of the lower level. Camera facing northeast.
- 14 South side-Detail of the stairs. Camera facing northeast.
- 15 East side-Detail of ramp. Camera facing north.
- 16 South side-Detail of observation deck on upper level.
- 17 South side-Detail of doors on upper level observation deck.
- 18 Upper level interior, information desk.
- 19 Upper level interior, exhibit cases.
- 20 Upper level interior, windows.

Historic Photo No. Photographic Information

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

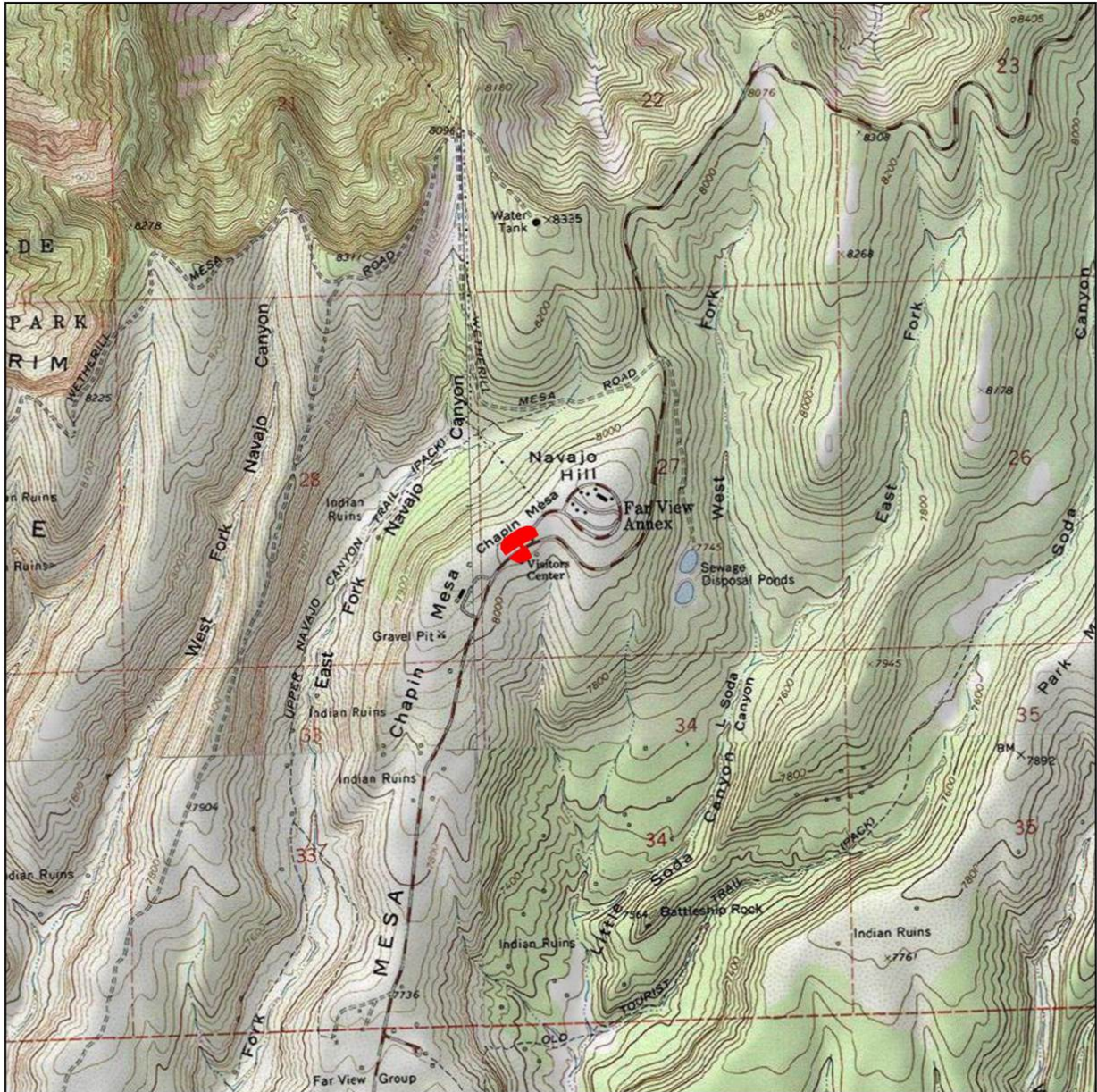
- H1 Bird's eye view of the Far View Visitor Center from the south, undated photograph, attributed to circa 1972, on file with the National Park Service
- H2 View of the Far View Visitor Center from the west, undated photograph, attributed to circa 1972, on file with the National Park Service

Figures

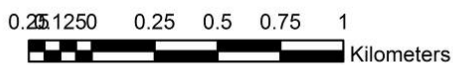
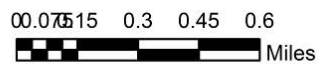
- F1 Ground plan and profile, Kiva No. 1, Site No. 16, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado. Source: James A. Lancaster, Jean M. Pinkley, Philip F. Van Cleave, and Don Watson, *Archeological Excavations in Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado: 1950* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1954).

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

Point Lookout Quadrangle, Colorado, 7.5 Minute Series



USGS 7.5' Topo Map, Point Lookout, Colo. T 35 N, R 15W, Section 27



 Far View Visitor Center Property Boundary



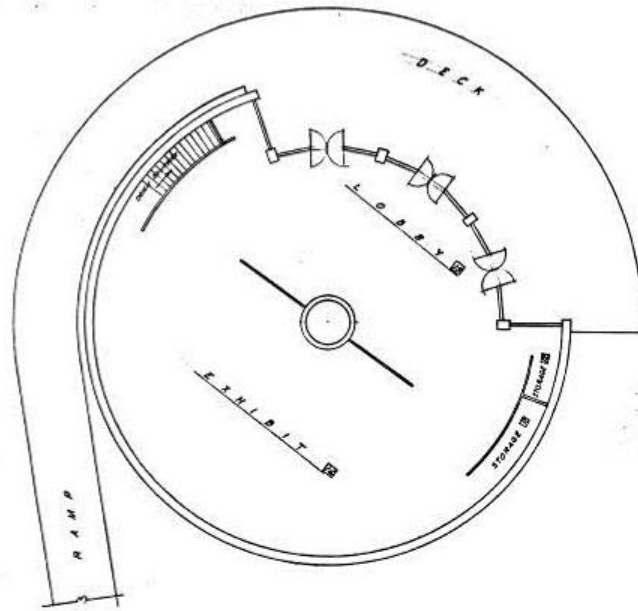
June 2018

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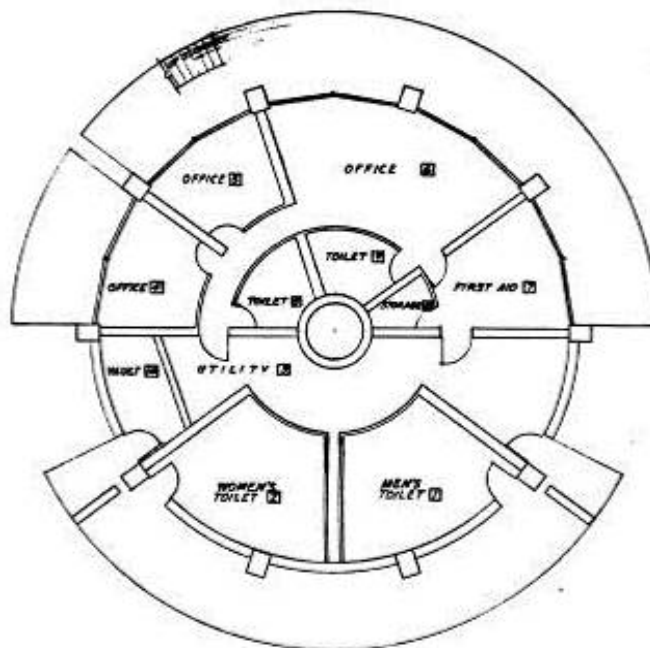
Produced by Mesa Verde National Park - Map for informational purposes only.

Sketch map of floor plans from drawings dated January 7, 1970.

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)



UPPER FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 3/8" = 1'-0"

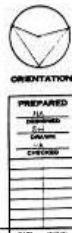
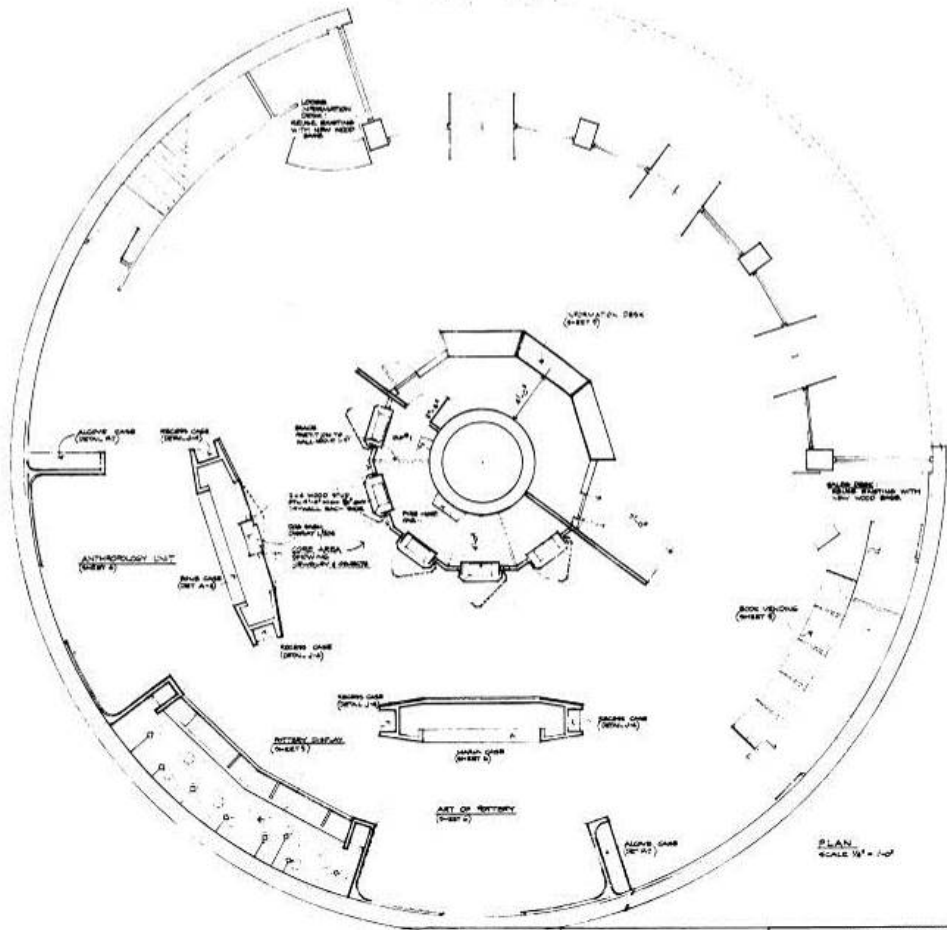


LOWER FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 3/8" = 1'-0"

COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES CONTINUATION SHEET

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)

Sketch map showing the exhibit displays in the upper level, from drawings dated September 16, 1968.

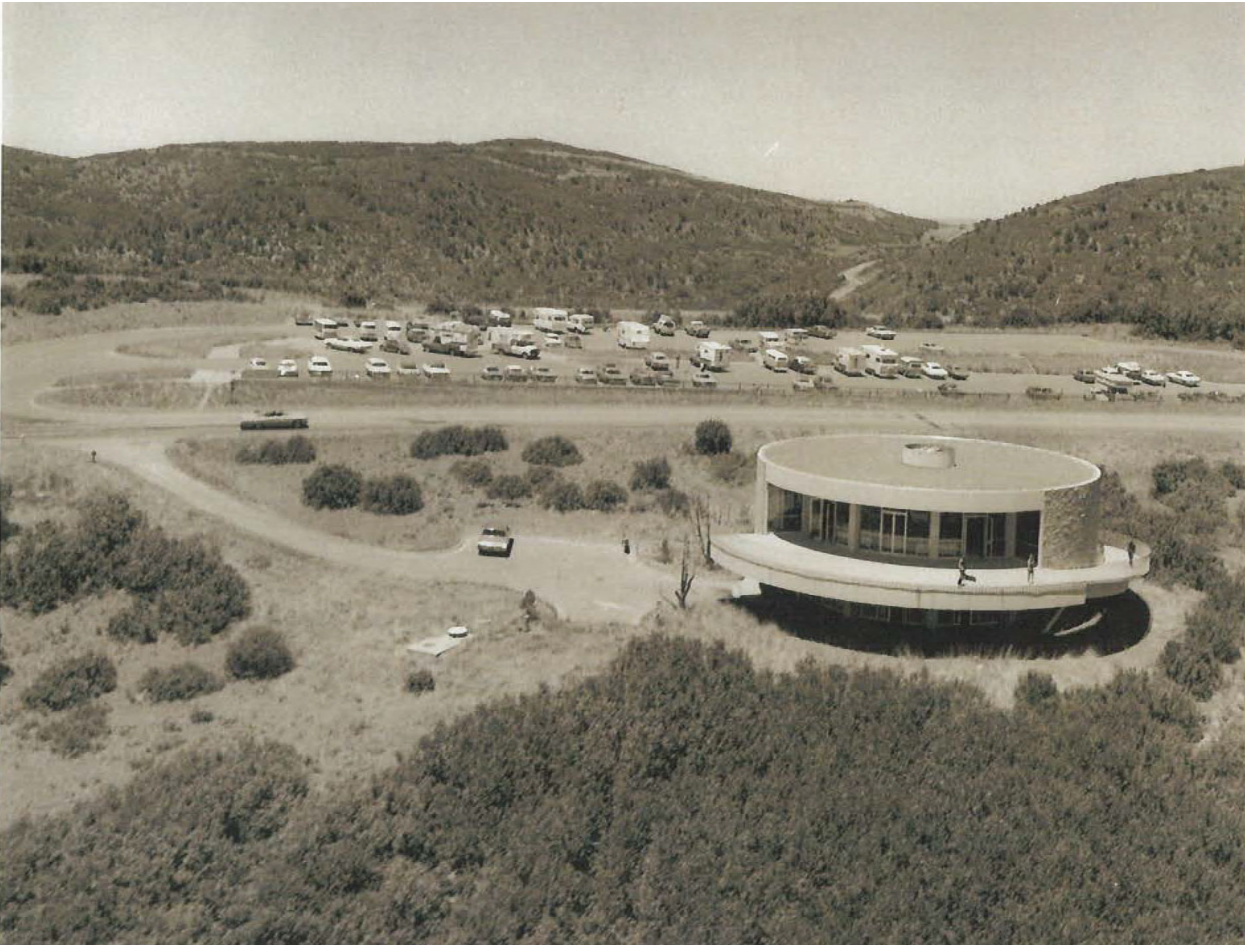


DATE	INITIALS	REVISION
		DESIGNED
		DRAWN
		CHECKED

SCALE NOTED	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF REVISION	
		UNITED STATES	
		DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR	
		NATIONAL PARK SERVICE	
		WASHINGTON PLANNING AND SERVICE CENTER	
		CHRISTINA CASALE DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION	
		NAVAJO ILLUSTRATIONS CENTER	
APPROVED			

WILLER BERNDTSON ARCHITECTS, INC.
315 N. GARDEN AVENUE, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)



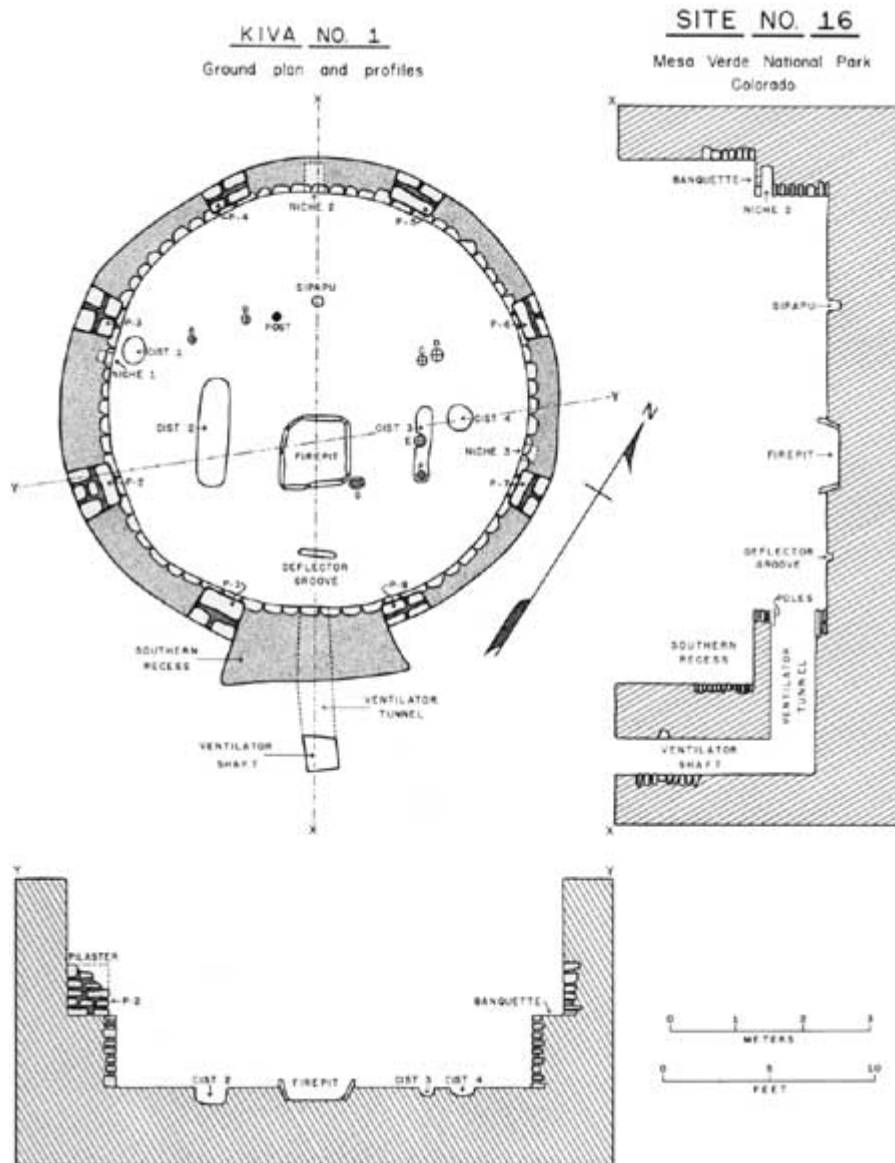
H1. Bird's eye view of the Far View Visitor Center from the south, undated photograph, attributed to circa 1972, on file with the National Park Service

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)



H2. View of the Far View Visitor Center from the west, undated photograph, attributed to circa 1972, on file with the National Park Service

Property Name Far View Visitor Center (Mesa Verde National Park)



F1. Ground plan and profile, Kiva No. 1, Site No. 16, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado. Source: James A. Lancaster, Jean M. Pinkley, Philip F. Van Cleave, and Don Watson, *Archeological Excavations in Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado: 1950* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1954).