



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot
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National Park Service News Release

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Montezuma Castle Visitor Center is 50 Years Old

To commemorate its upcoming 50th anniversary in 1966, the National Park Service initiated a 10-year program in 1956 to prepare it to meet the demands of the next 50 years. Dubbed “Mission 66”, this effort gave birth to the visitor center, as we know it today. Fifty years ago this month, U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater cut the ribbon dedicating Montezuma Castle National Monument’s new state of the art visitor center, a facility that was built as part of this initiative.

A program commemorating the architecture and history of the ten-year Mission 66 period, along with a discussion of today’s preservation initiatives, will be held Monday, September 27, from 10 to 11 a.m. at the historic building near Camp Verde.

Special speakers will outline the Vanishing Treasures program of the National Park Service, and discuss other topics that highlight the agency’s Mission 66 program from 1956 to 1965. Barry Goldwater, Jr., representing the Goldwater family, will recall his father’s commitment to documenting the culture and history of Arizona along with some stories of family excursions to the Verde Valley.

At 10 a.m. on September 27, “*It’s All About Preservation*”, will be addressed by Randall Skeirik, historical architect for the Vanishing Treasures (VT) Program. VT, created to help preserve cultural resources that are in a state of partial deterioration, employs Mr. Skeirik as a consultant for the 45 National Parks and Monuments included in the program. He has over 20 years experience in the field of historic preservation and has worked in the private sector, for two State Historic Preservation Offices, and for non-profit organizations including the Taliesin Preservation Commission.

Mr. Skeirik’s program will include an overview of Vanishing Treasures, which offers resources such as information on traditional construction materials and techniques and appropriate preservation treatments, to parks in need of such services. He will outline the National Preservation Historic Act and the assumption of the role of the National Park Service as the federal historic preservation agency.

Thomas Patin, Jr., director of the School of Art for Northern Arizona University, will next share his expertise on “*Modernism and Mission 66 Architecture*”. Dr. Patin, also a professor of art history, specializes in the modernist movement and his research centers on display, presentation and exhibition in American visual culture. He has been investigating the development of techniques of displaying nature and human history in the American

national park system, how parks and monuments shape public opinion, and discussion of the natural world with how people relate to this system.

Barry Goldwater, Jr., will present, “*Travels With My Father: Climbing the Castle and other Stories of Past Arizona*”. Mr. Goldwater, retired U.S. Congressman, will discuss some of the many trips his father made with the family to central Arizona, teaching and sharing with his children the significance of history. Mr. Goldwater, who has continued with his own love of history, will recall trips to Montezuma Castle, Tuzigoot and Jerome.

The Mission 66 initiative was launched in 1955 in response to NPS Director Conrad Wirth’s directive to improve visitor services in time for the 50th anniversary of the National Park Service, created in 1916. Director Wirth envisioned the program as continuing the work started by the programs of the New Deal era in the 1930s, and focused on improving visitor services and building infrastructure.

“Essentially, there was no such thing as a visitor center before this time,” explained Randall Skeirik. “This was a whole new concept – a place where people could get information, see exhibits, buy post cards, all under one roof. This new concept required a new architectural design.” He added that World War II and the Korean War curtailed funding for park improvements, so Mission 66 funding was significant in expanding Park Service holdings.

There is no fee for entrance and the special program from 8 a.m. to noon on September 27; regular fees will apply from noon to closing. Montezuma Castle National Monument is located off Interstate 17 at exit 289 near the town of Camp Verde, Az. For additional information, call 928-567-3322, extension zero.

Caption for photo

The new Montezuma Castle National Monument Visitor Center in September, 1960. The building was funded by the National Park Service Mission 66 program which will be the topic of a special program Monday, September 27, at 10 a.m. In addition to talks on preservation and architecture, Barry Goldwater, Jr., will recount stories of trips to the Verde Valley with his father, who officially dedicated the new building in 1960.

Photo courtesy of National Park Service

Note to media: Photographs of the dedication ceremony are available through download courtesy the Arizona Memory Project, a service of the Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records.

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