

# Museum History

Zion's first museum opened in 1924 in one small room of the historic Grotto building. It was filled with various objects collected in the field by ranger naturalists, including plant specimens, insects, and archeological artifacts. Exhibits in these



*Visitors gathered around the live reptile cage. Museum Catalog No. ZION 13473*



*Two artisans painting the plaster relief map of Zion Canyon, 1934. The map is on permanent display in the Zion Human History Museum in the next room. Museum Catalog No. ZION 13309*

early days primarily served to support ranger programs. One such exhibit was a live reptile cage installed at the museum in 1928. Rangers gave regular reptile-themed programs using these live props, such as rattlesnakes and gopher snakes.

During the Great Depression many young men were put to work in the National Park Service as part of the Civilian Conservation Corps, a public work relief program funded through the New Deal. These workers made exhibit cases, dioramas, and other objects for park museums. In 1936, they converted the old park headquarters at Canyon Junction to the Museum and Visitor Information Station.



*The historic Grotto building, home to Zion's first museum. Museum Catalog No. ZION 10249*



*Canyon Junction Museum and Visitor Information Station, circa 1936. Museum Catalog No. ZION 1134.02/004.02/02*

In the 1960s a 10-year building initiative called Mission 66 enabled the improvement and construction of infrastructure in the national parks. As a result, Zion built a new visitor center complete with professional museum exhibits, offices, and auditorium. In 2002, after the new visitor center opened in its current location, the Mission 66 building reopened as the Zion Human History Museum.

This building has served as the Zion museum for nearly 60 years. During that time, the exhibits have undergone multiple changes and rearrangements. This room was the primary exhibit space before it was made smaller to accommodate storage space and the bookstore in 2008. The room next door with the large relief map served as the park's visitor center, with a long desk where rangers were available to answer questions and sell park publications.



*The wood divider pictured here is still in use, now sandwiched between two wooden panels separating this gallery from the bookstore area. Museum Catalog No. ZION 1134.01/201.06/01/07*



*On June 17, 1960, the new Visitor Center and Administration building opened and replaced the Visitor Center at Canyon Junction. Museum Catalog No. ZION 12163*



*Museum exhibits in the 1980s. Museum Catalog No. ZION 1134.01/004.01/03/02*