Similar scenarios were taking place in many other parks in the 1940s, but Yosemite Valley held great significance for Vint, as it did for many others concerned with national park preservation. Vint had begun his Park Service career at Yosemite in 1922, and he remained particularly interested in the park while he headed the San Francisco field office of design and construction staff between 1927 and 1933. Vint had always worked closely with the Yosemite National Park Board of Expert Advisors, formed in 1928 with Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. as its first chairman. While his ideas for removing development from the valley might have seemed radical to some in 1945, they were actually a reiteration of a much older vision for the valley, described by the elder Frederick Law Olmsted in 1865. Even then, Olmsted knew that the number of visitors to the valley would "within a century" be in the "millions," and in his 1865 plan for the valley he therefore suggested minimal development: essentially a one-way loop road, trails, bathrooms, and campgrounds, which would serve as the only overnight accommodations.[25] The younger Olmsted had retained his father's interest in Yosemite, and as an influential member of the park's Board of Expert Advisors was an important supporter of Vint. Together they had considered such issues as the construction of the new Wawona Road (begun in 1930) and the proposed "ropeway" (or cable car) from the Happy Isles area of the valley to Glacier Point. While they believed that road construction was an appropriate and desirable modernization of the park landscape, they fought and defeated the visual intrusion of prominent "mechanical features" such as the ropeway.[26]

Through his own work and his association with Olmsted, Vint was well versed in the preservation issues of Yosemite Valley. In 1945 he was not only advancing a radical postwar vision for the management of the valley, he was asserting the priorities of the oldest national park plan of all: the elder Olmsted's 1865 plan. In March 1955 Wirth, Garrison, and Carnes made Vint's planning ideas the first policy framework for Mission 66. The new era of national park master planning was off to an optimistic start.

By that time the Mission 66 planners had decided to create a model master plan for a park selected as representative of many common problems and management considerations. That park would not be Yosemite, which was unique and too complex to serve the purpose effectively. Wirth chose instead to make Mount Rainier Na-

View of Yosemite Valley as seen entering from the west on Wawona Road. Author's photo.

In 1865 Frederick Law Olmsted described Yosemite Valley as a unique juxtaposition of the sublime scenery of waterfalls and sheer granite walls and the pastoral beauty of the valley floor. Author's photo.

The Jackson Lake Lodge in Grand Teton National Park, designed by Gilbert Stanley Underwood, opened in 1955. NPS Historic Photo Collection.

gested the rough wooden molds used in concrete construction rather than clapboard siding or timbers. This handling of concrete underscored the modernist inspiration of the building's massing, which Underwood conceived as an interlocking series of large rectangular boxes topped by shed roofs, directly expressing the functions and spaces of the interior volumes. Large horizontal bands of windows and the massive window wall of the main lounge further emphasized and confirmed the influence of American modernist architectural design.[4]

Underwood had come out of retirement for this last major commission of his career. While he showed his mastery of a building type he had done so much to develop—the national park lodge—he also made a striking statement about how postwar park architecture could adopt contemporary structural design and construction technology. While the results were dramatic, the architect had not abandoned many of the basic qualities that had made his earlier work seem so appropriate in its settings. The spatial sequence upon entering the building, and the importance

of views of the surrounding landscape in that sequence, were reminiscent of his other lodges, as were the earth tones and rough textures of the building materials. The success of the project, which like Underwood's earlier lodges soon was frequented by celebrities as well as the general public, helped make the lodge an important indicator of future directions park architecture might take. Conrad Wirth, John D. Rockefeller Jr., and Rockefeller's son, Laurance, all spoke at the Jackson Lake Lodge dedication, held in June 1955, as Mission 66 planning was in full swing. As a "pilot project," Underwood's updated approach to national park architecture had won their support. The architect had taken some of the trends of mid-century American modernism—the extensive use of concrete, large windows, flat rooflines, geometric massing—and adapted them to the purposes, program, and goals of postwar national park planning. The lodge was massive, but it was also partially set into the earth, given shed roofs with low angles, and constructed in earth-tone materials, all of which helped make it less visually obtrusive in its setting. Above all, it was conceived around the view showcased by its main windows. The entire building served as a viewing platform, with outdoor terraces oriented to the view as well. Unmistakably modernist in its inspiration, the Jackson Lake Lodge revised traditional assumptions about what made architecture "appropriate" in the setting of a national park. For Underwood, Wirth, and the Rockefellers, the new lodge succeeded by increasing the capacity for enjoyment of park landscapes while reducing the visual intrusion of the necessary facilities. The entire complex, including a large parking lot heavily planted with native trees that

The Jackson Lake Lodge featured decentralized motel units as well as the main lodge building. NPS Historic Photo Collection.

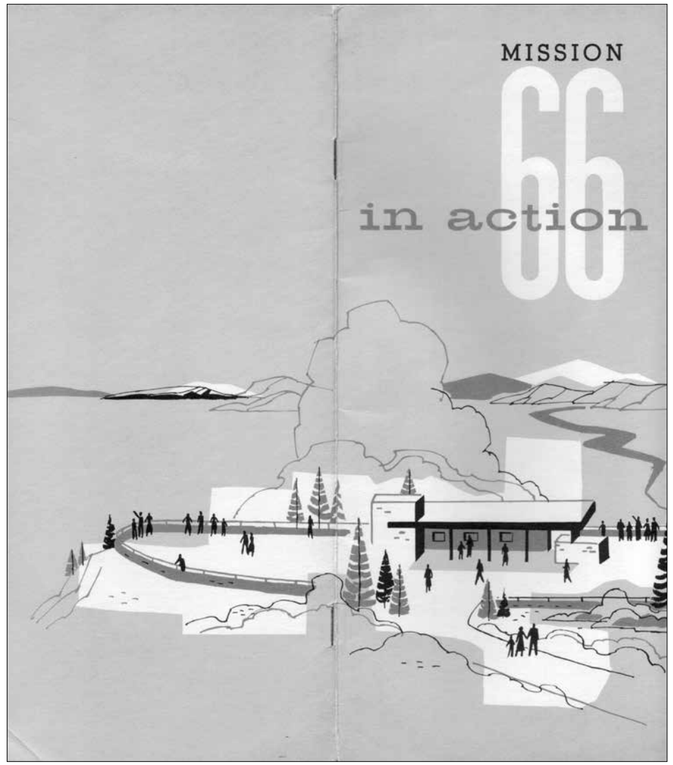
and they approved of it, as confirmed by the fact that the work went forward. By the time architectural designs for Mission 66 were being finalized in 1956, adapted forms of "contemporary" architecture were already the desired style of architectural design in the national parks. Although there was occasional acknowledgement of critiques by Devereux Butcher and others, there was no more internal debate at the Park Service over the appropriateness of modernist architecture than there was over Wirth's fateful decision not to restrict access to popular parks.[20] In fact, as we have seen, the two important decisions were linked.

Even if modernist park architecture was vital to the implementation and success of Mission 66, it was the increased functionality and efficiency that could be achieved through modernist design, materials, and building technologies that primarily interested Wirth, Vint, and their planners. They did not adopt modernism as a style so much as they invented a distinctly modernist building type—the visitor center—and then used it extensively to implement their revised park planning ideas. A number of architects, landscape architects, historians, and interpreters contributed to the development of the visitor center. Like many modernist projects, the new buildings resulted from interdisciplinary cooperation and an increased emphasis on objective, efficient solutions to planning problems. The organization of the WODC and the EODC in 1954 brought Park Service designers, engineers, and historians together in their own offices in San Francisco and Philadelphia, independent of the regional administrative offices. In Washington, Vint remained overall chief of design and construction, assisted by chief landscape architect Bill Carnes and chief architect Dick Sutton. In San Francisco, Sanford Hill headed the WODC, with Robert Hall as supervising landscape architect and Lyle Bennett as supervising architect. The EODC was headed by Edward Zimmer, with Harvey Cornell and John Cabot in the same respective roles. By 1960 Mission 66 had swelled the professional ranks in these two design offices to several hundred in-house landscape architects, architects, and administrative employees. Almost without exception, these managers were longtime Park Service employees who, regardless of where they received their academic training, had gained their most formative professional experience working in state and national parks during the New Deal.[21]

It was in the offices of the WODC and the EODC between 1954 and 1957 that the idea of the visitor center was elaborated as the successor to park museum and administration buildings. Early 1950s versions of visitor centers were first described as "administrative-museum," "public service," or "public use" buildings, reflecting the struggle to resolve complex, combined building programs. In February 1956, as initial plans for Mission 66 reached completion, Wirth issued a memorandum insisting that the term "visitor center" be used consistently. Wirth's terminology helps clarify the relationship of this new building type to contemporary trends in planning and architecture, particularly shopping center design. Visitor centers were predicated on the same assumptions as contemporary shopping centers: that large numbers of customers would be arriving by private car, and that both

they and their vehicles needed to be efficiently handled as they shifted from the automotive realm to a strictly pedestrian environment, where they could conveniently find all services clustered together. In early designs for "public use buildings" at Carlsbad Caverns (1953) and Grand Canyon (1954), WODC architects (especially Cecil Doty) attempted to combine many of the functions of an entire park village in a single large building, described in one case as "a one-stop service unit." Park Service offices and interpretive display areas, as well as bathrooms, information desks, auditoriums, and generous lobbies, were all concentrated in efficient sequences of indoor spaces that were linked together in plan by a diagrammatic conception of "visitor flow."[22] Most of these spaces related to functions previously handled in separate structures, such as museums, comfort stations, and administration buildings; but new audio-visual media and increased numbers of visitors required larger (even multiple) auditoriums and spacious lobbies that could receive and organize floods of arrivals. The new buildings were planned in conjunction with extensive parking lots and new or realigned park roads. Congestion was to be avoided above all. "Circulation must be a continuous process of motion" for both vehicles and pedestrians, as Welton Becket advised for shopping center design (at the time he was also designing the Canyon Village Lodge complex at Yellowstone).[23] The concept of "one-stop shopping" took shape as the Park Service developed the visitor center, and for many of the same reasons. In fact, at a design conference in 1958, architect Lyle Bennett complained about the term "visitor center" because the public con-

OPPOSITE: Carlsbad Caverns National Park, New Mexico, visitor center designed by Park Service staff between 1953 and 1955. This was another early experiment in the development of the visitor center building type. Carlsbad Caverns National Park Archives.



The cover of a Mission 66 public information brochure illustrates an idealized visitor center as an almost transparent pavilion, offering a sequence of views through window walls and from outdoor terraces. NPS History Collection.

museum design. Those rustic buildings were sited to form elements of pictorial landscape compositions experienced by visitors moving through and around a park village. Great effort and expense went into the design of elaborate façades that evoked Swiss chalets, "pioneer" construction, or "Indian" culture. But the outward stylistic or aesthetic appearance of the Mission 66 visitor center—as long as it was minimal and did not visually contrast with its surroundings or call too much attention to itself—was almost inconsequential. The removal of most ornamentation and historical allusion was another aspect of modernism that fit the purpose of the new buildings perfectly, since they were meant not to have a powerful presence themselves but to recede visually even as they facilitated the appreciation of park landscapes and resources by ever larger numbers of people. The architecture, ideally, should be nearly transparent: a composition of functional, overlapping spaces and outward views, not of structural mass and decorative façades.

The best Mission 66 visitor centers achieved this adaptation of contemporary modernist ideas to the goals espoused by Park Service landscape architects and interpreters. Successful examples included many smaller, less expensive buildings. Cecil Doty's Zion (1957) and Montezuma Castle visitor centers (1958) typify an unpretentious, functional approach to architecture that met pressing needs for visitor and administrative functions with dignified efficiency and minimal visual intrusion on the landscape. At Zion, from the public (front) side the visitor center appears to be a low, horizontal earth-tone structure. It was sited on a slope, however, so that two stories of maintenance and

From rustic to modern in Zion National Park. The park's rustic museum (top left), sited on a dangerous curve near the park entrance, was overwhelmed by postwar levels of use. The new visitor center (1957-1961) was built just inside the park. The public spaces featured window walls, an outdoor terrace, a contact desk, and other facilities, all well separated from the extensive office and maintenance areas attached in a long, low wing. Zion National Park Archives.

Many of the most successful and representative visitor centers were the less expensive, more typical examples. Cecil Doty was involved in the design of many in this category. Colter Bay Visitor Center in Grand Teton was designed by Doty with consulting architects Malone and Hooper, 1956-1958. NPS Historic Photo Collection.

Doty and WODC staff designed the Hoh Forest Visitor Center, Olympic National Park, in 1962. NPS Historic Photo Collection.

The Panther Junction Visitor Center in Big Bend National Park was designed by Doty and the WODC between 1964 and 1968. Author's photo.

The Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center was a collaboration of Doty, the WODC, and John Morse and Associates. Author's photo.

Capitol Reef National Park Visitor Center was designed by Doty, the WODC, and Arthur K. Olsen and Associates in 1965–1966. NPS Historic Photo Collection.

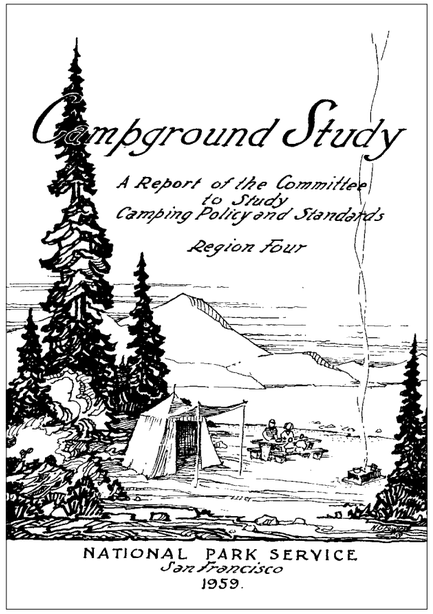
66 represented. Considering the subsequent adoption of visitor center buildings by park agencies of all kinds all over the world, this new type of building must be considered one of the most influential public land management strategies ever devised.

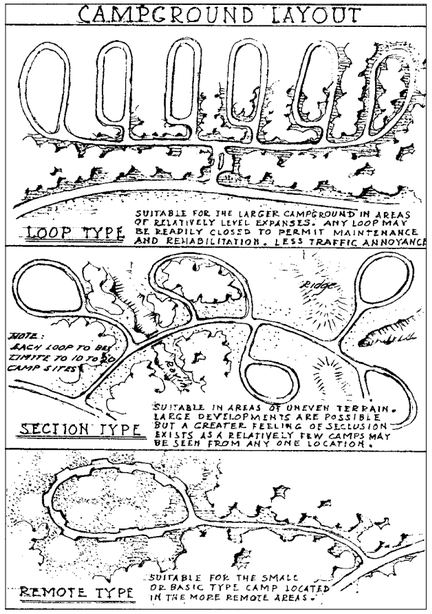
The national park visitor centers also established the Park Service as an important architectural patron, willing to employ the most advanced contemporary design ideas that leading professionals had to offer. In 1954 Conrad Wirth had famously rejected Frank Lloyd Wright as the architect for a new restaurant in Yosemite Valley. Wirth derided Wright's proposal as a "mushroom-dome type of thing," a "thing to see, instead of being for service."[42] The very next year, however, Wirth dedicated the Jackson Lake Lodge, and at the same time his own design offices, the WODC and EODC, were producing modernist designs, some of which continued to startle and occasionally outrage at least some critics. In 1955 Cabot and EODC project architect Donald F. Benson designed futuristic shade structures for Coquina Beach at the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The large metal louvers resembled a series of attached airplane wings. They attracted notice; the project was published in *Progressive Architecture* and won an American

Coquina Beach bathhouse and shade structure, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, designed by the EODC in 1955. NPS Historic Photo Collection.

also prepared, typically drawn at scales of one hundred to four hundred feet to the inch. Finally, the landscape architects also drew detailed designs for small structures such as individual parking lots and campgrounds, wayside interpretive areas and kiosks, building façades, guardrails, signs, and other landscape features. Construction documents were prepared as needed to convey to contractors the exact dimensions and character of construction and to provide the basis for detailed cost estimates.

During Mission 66, landscape architects continued to create and revise master plans under Vint's supervision. This work now entailed siting visitor centers and other facilities and integrating them into the new interpretive program for the park. While tension could develop between the provisions of earlier master plans and different ideas presented in Mission 66 prospectuses, more often the two planning processes converged. In some cases the same landscape architects were producing both documents. In others (particularly several of the "pilot prospectuses"), the participants met and attempted to reconcile their plans. Landscape architects in the WODC and EODC, in Washington, and in individual parks



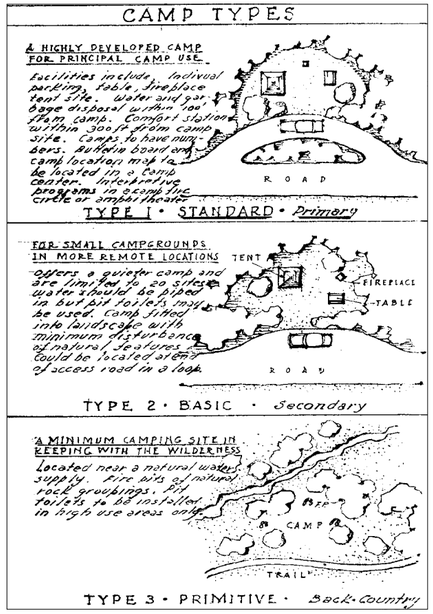


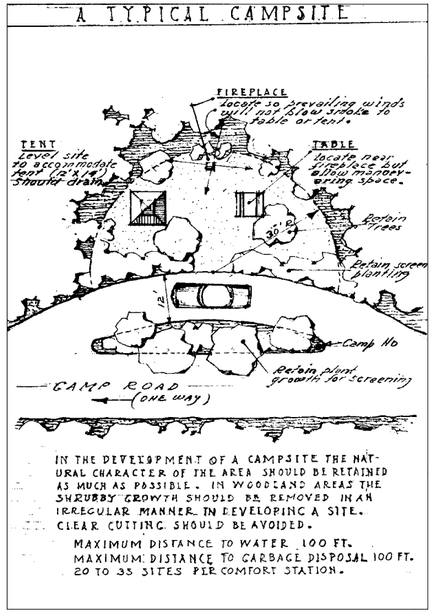
In 1959 Region IV (San Francisco) landscape architects produced a manual for Park Service campground design. Mission 66 introduced new standards for utilities and sanitation, and more generous road and campground layouts for larger vehicles and trailers. In general, Mission 66 campgrounds had far greater capacities than prewar campgrounds but were sited in areas considered to be less sensitive. NPS Western Regional Office, San Francisco.

revised and developed both master plans and prospectuses, eventually producing consistent development strategies for virtually every park. The experience of rapidly preparing so many prospectuses eventually affected the master planning process. By the early 1960s some master plans, called "conceptual master plans," more closely resembled the shorter, smaller-format prospectuses, with more text and fewer drawings.

Landscape architects also continued to provide smaller-scaled designs for campgrounds, parking lots, waysides, and other site development. In addition to siting a park's visitor center, in other words, the designers might lay out the parking lots and paths and determine the general orientation of the building complex within the surrounding landscape. Or, once the decision to relocate a campground was made, landscape architects would locate and design the new campground, typically with the greater capacity and more generous dimensions demanded by the larger size and numbers of trailers and other recreational vehicles pouring into the parks.

But to a significant degree, the middle scale of landscape architecture—the scale of the park





National park campers as illustrated in a slide from "Mission 66 in Action" in 1958.
NPS History Collection.

village—was supplanted by visitor center planning and design as the visitor center complex centralized and replaced many of the public and administrative functions of the prewar rustic village. For obvious reasons, architects and interpreters were more essential than landscape architects in the design of visitor center buildings. There were a few new concessioner areas with overnight accommodations that were described as "villages" under Mission 66, but the rustic village idea had largely been superseded by the new day use facilities that embodied the strategy and priorities of Mission 66.

While landscape architects no longer controlled to the same degree the way parks were planned and developed, they had become more influential than ever within the Park Service. Wirth, Vint, EODC chief Edward Zimmer, chief of the Mission 66 working staff Bill Carnes, and many other agency designers and managers had all been trained as landscape architects. As they reached senior administrative positions, they were running the agency many of them had joined over twenty years earlier. As a massive park modernization program, Mission 66 was essentially a landscape architectural project. Along with other agency officials, Park Service landscape architects were responsible for Vint's "Plan B," the "guiding principles" of the Mission 66 program, and other basic revisions of park planning procedures. In the broadest sense, Wirth's national recreational planning efforts, and the overall concept and implementation of the Mission 66 program itself, were the most important products of Mission 66 landscape architecture. The significance of landscape architecture under Mission 66 was clearly not limited to individual design projects, such as the layout of campgrounds and day use areas. Nevertheless, the role of the landscape architect in national

park planning clearly changed, and even decreased, under Mission 66. This shift reflected parallel developments in the profession of landscape architecture as a whole, and in the long relationship between landscape architects and American park making.

"Landscape architecture" had historically meant the profession of park planning and design in the United States. Frederick Law Olmsted coined the term to describe his work with Calvert Vaux designing municipal parks and park systems in the 1860s. By the end of the nineteenth century, scores of municipalities, counties, and states had hired landscape architects to plan and design systems of parks and "scenic reservations" all over the country. The Department of the Interior began using landscape architects to plan the development of national parks in 1914. When the National Park Service was created in 1916, the agency's mandate, as it was understood by the framers of its legislation and its first directors, was to expand and modernize a system of federal scenic reservations for the enjoyment of an increasingly automotive public, and to do so in a manner that would allow future generations to enjoy the same privilege.

In the late 1920s, while he was convincing Albright of the importance of park master planning, Vint argued that landscape architecture was a profession that offered "a practical solution to the problem at hand" while also taking into consideration "the element of beauty." The latter could be attained in park development, he observed, only when the "congruity of parts gives harmonious form to the whole." The "first work" of the agency, therefore, was "the protec-

Mission 66 campground design in Yellowstone. Typical campground layout, comfort station, and amphitheater.
Author's photos.