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D E P A R T M E N T O F T H E I N T E R I O R

WHAT IS MISSION 66?

MISSION 66 is a forward-looking program for the National Park System intended to so develop and staff these priceless possessions of the American people as to permit their wisest possible use; maximum enjoyment for those who use them; and maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources that give them distinction.

Construction is an important element of the program. Modern roads, well planned trails, utilities, camp and picnic grounds, and many kinds of structures needed for public use or administration, to meet the requirements of an expected 80 million visitors in 1966, are necessary; but they are simply one means by which "enjoyment-without-impairment" is to be provided.

Under this program, outmoded and inadequate facilities will be replaced with physical improvements adequate for expected demands but so designed and located as to reduce the impact of public use on valuable and destructible features. It will provide both facilities and personnel for visitor services of the quality and quantity that the public is entitled to expect in its National Park System. It is intended to assure the fullest possible degree of protection, both to visitors and resources.

MISSION 66 is a long-range program; it will require at least 10 years to accomplish on a sound and realistic dollar basis. That means completion in 1966 -- the 50th anniversary year of the establishment of the National Park Service. The program has received enthusiastic endorsement by the President of the United States and his Cabinet, and well received by the Congress and the Nation at large.

The MISSION 66 program, as it pertains to Casa Grande National Monument, is briefed in the accompanying report to provide information on what is planned and when it will be accomplished.

MISSION 66
for
CASA GRANDE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Introduction

What is Casa Grande?

The Casa Grande, or Big House, is a massive-walled, four-story building built of caliche about 600 years ago by the prehistoric farmers of the Gila River Valley of central Arizona. This ruin is the focal point of an extensive cluster of village and house sites of the Hohokam culture. The Casa Grande has been a landmark since it was first visited by the Jesuit explorer, Padre Eusebio Kino, in 1694. Since the American penetration of the area in the mid-nineteenth century followed the Gila River as a route to California, the ruins were visited and described by many pioneers. To protect this unique relic from damage and to preserve it for the American people, the government, in 1892, wisely set aside 473 acres around the ruin withdrawing it from homestead entry; thus making it the first archaeological area so reserved.

The Significance of Casa Grande

The middle Gila Valley has had an aboriginal population for at least 2000 years. During much of that period the dominant culture was that of the Hohokam who, during the time span of about 700 A.D. to about 1400 A.D., developed agriculture to a high degree through canal irrigation. During the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the Hohokam were influenced to a great degree by a Pueblo people who probably moved into the valley from the northeast in some numbers. It was during this period that population reached its peak and that the Casa Grande was built. The monument itself contains almost a hundred mounds representing possibly as many as twenty-five separate village sites spanning at least four phases of Hohokam development -- possibly 700 years of cultural continuity. As more and more of the archaeological sites in the valley are destroyed by cultivation and expansion of metropolitan areas the monument becomes a storehouse of information for future excavation and study.

The Purpose

Casa Grande National Monument exists to help the visitor, through inspection of the excavated village and the Casa Grande itself, and through study of museum exhibits, to get a glimpse of a vanished civilization and to gain some understanding of how this group was able to adjust itself to its harsh environment.

The Problem

The travel to Casa Grande has increased in the past few years as it has to all National Park Service areas. Visitors to the monument in 1956 were almost double the number in 1946 -- there has been no corresponding increase in staff or facilities. At present the only archeological feature open to the public is Compound "A" containing the Casa Grande. This site was excavated in 1906-7 and, except for various maintenance and preservative operations, nothing has been done since that date. Compound "A" is representative of the last phase of the prehistoric Hohokam culture with its Puebloan overlay but in itself does not give the interested visitor a comprehensive picture of the prehistory of the valley. Casa Grande is one of the few areas not easily adapted to self-guided trails. The present staff is finding it difficult with the increase in visitation to keep up with the demand for a ranger-conducted tour. The museum, which was built in 1931 and remodeled in 1941, is adequate as a plant but needs considerable reorganization and expansion of the exhibits.

The Program

The Ruins

Immediately to the north of the museum and parking area lie the ruins of Compound "E", a large excavated site of the Soho phase of the Classic Hohokam. This ruin is representative of an earlier stage in the development of the culture and contains architectural features differing from those evident in Compound "A". Its reopening will give the visitor a more orderly story of the gradual evolution that took place in the valley. The site will need some re-excavation and considerable stabilization before it can be exhibited. Also in the vicinity of Compound "B" is an excellent example of a Hohokam ball court, a distinctive feature of the archaeology of southern Arizona. There are none of these interesting game courts on exhibit in the United States and the excavation and restoration of Casa Grande's ball court will add to the visitor's appreciation of the area.

Nature Trail

The open area behind the museum is well adapted to the construction of a short natural history trail which will emphasize the use which the Indians, both ancient and modern, made of the plant life available to them.

The Museum

A reorganization of the museum exhibits and additions to them will attempt to portray, in an orderly sequence, the culture of the Hohokam. Visits to the ruins can do little more than acquaint the visitor with architectural types. The museum will give him a glimpse of other facets of primitive life -- agriculture, canals, tools, burial customs, arts and crafts. The inclusion of dioramas, or other three dimensional exhibits will go far to make the ancient life of the Gila Valley come alive for the visitor.

Protection

Increased deterioration of the upper story of the Casa Grande points up the need for greater protection of the building. The erosive action of wind-driven sand and rain is accelerating. A complete enclosure of glass or plastic is necessary to prevent further crumbling of the walls.

The Staff

The present staff of four permanent members and one part-time ranger is not adequate to handle the work load presented by the increased traffic to the monument. The MISSION 66 plan for Casa Grande proposes to add to the staff an administrative aide whose work will release the Superintendent from minor details of office work and allow him more time for the executive function of over-all planning and management. Two more seasonal ranger-archaeologists will be added whose duties will be largely in the field of visitor contact and interpretation.

Summary of the Program

Casa Grande is the only National Park Service archaeological area which exhibits remains of the Hohokam, one of the most vital cultures of the Southwest. Through numerous parks, museums, and monuments the Pueblo life is well illustrated for the interested visitor. The improvements

referred to in the above paragraphs will help to round out the picture and be a great aid in the interpretation of the prehistory of the area and will leave the visitor with a feeling of respect for the way in which these early desert dwellers met the challenge of their environment.

The increase in size and number of interpretive facilities will permit simultaneous use of different areas within the monument and thus reduce the congestion and make possible a more efficient handling of the ever-increasing traffic.

Cost of the Program

The need for improvement at many National Park Service areas is greater than at Casa Grande and it is felt that development at the monument will come in the later years of MISSION 66. The following figures are rough estimates only but will indicate the approximate cost of the intended program:

Roads, Trails and Walks:	\$16,000
Utilities:	
Underground Power Line	2,900
Buildings:	
Administrative (museum, patio, landscaping)	50,000
Utility	14,100
Protective Covering for Casa Grande	125,000
Miscellaneous:	
Elimination of Surplus Buildings	10,000
Improvements to Parking Area	2,400
Total	<u>\$220,400</u>

Conclusion

The 1966 visitor to Casa Grande National Monument will be assured of finding the ruins still in a good state of preservation and will receive adequate interpretation of the antiquities of the area. Through study of balanced and integrated museum exhibits, through trips to three separate but related archaeological sites and by contact with an informed staff of rangers, the visitor will be able to come away with some understanding of the life of the Hohokam and can leave with an assurance that the Casa Grande will still be here for the inspection of future generations.