

Artist Point Overlook Cultural Landscape Inventory Summary



Artist Point Overlook as seen from the North Rim (2002)

"In carrying out the work, the principal aim was to provide a structure that would blend with the Canyon rim and wall. Considerable difficulty was experienced in obtaining rock and boulders that were well weathered and that would simulate the natural structural form of the localities. Such stone was finally found... Quantities handled were comparatively small, but the work as a whole was a matter of trial and error, placing and replacing the rock work until a satisfying blending was obtained." (C.A. Lord, Chief Engineer 1937)

Historical Significance

Artist Point Overlook is significant under three National Register Criteria (A, B and C). Criterion C speaks to its physical character and style: The site embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period of construction; "National Park Service Rustic Style," a grand era of park building marked by naturalistic principles, craftsmanship, and native materials. In 1936, the National Park Service described this philosophy when challenged with a great deal of Emergency Conservation Work in 1936:

"To keep the natural beauty of mountain, forest, lake and waterfall unspoiled and yet within easy access of such a multitude of visitors....roads, trails, and buildings all should provide a maximum of scenic view, at the same time being as inconspicuous as possible themselves....The landscape process begins with selecting locations which do not tear up the landscape or obtrude into important views. This is followed by a study of the design, which endeavors to use native materials and other architectural features that will harmonize the structure with its surroundings. The last phase of the problem is the placing of any plant materials necessary to cure unavoidable damage that may have resulted from the construction."

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Historical Chronology



1903 Artist Point Road (now known as South Rim Drive) is constructed. The road extends from the Chittenden Bridge and terminates in a looped cul-de-sac at the base of the Artist Point Overlook.

1906 Artist Point Road terminus is widened to 18 ft. to allow horse-drawn coaches to turn around and park at the base of the elevated overlook.



1907 A wooden overlook platform is constructed at Artist Point.

Historical Chronology (continued)

- 1930 Parking lot is created, terminating automobile access 350-feet short of the overlook. A pedestrian promenade is created between the parking area and the overlook, marked by a kiosk at its entry. The looped cul-de-sac at the base of the overlook is adapted as a pedestrian access zone.



- 1931 Topographic survey completed for Artist Point Overlook. Shows trail at the location of the steps. Shows a very wide cul-de-sac where cars formerly drove and parked before they were prohibited in 1930.

(see fold out map of 1931 topographic survey)

- 1938 The extant overlook platform encircled by a stone parapet wall replaces the unstable wooden platform. A sister-set of stairs, split-log benches and boulder edging along the promenade and lower platform area are also installed during this two-year period of construction.



Historic Integrity

The historic integrity of a cultural landscape relates to the ability of the landscape to convey its significance. Historic integrity is assessed to determine if the landscape characteristics and associated features, and the spatial qualities that shaped the landscape during the historic period, are present in much the same way as they were historically.

Cultural Traditions: NPS Rustic style: Contributing features include: naturalistic placement of boulders, rock walls, steps, use of vegetation, split log benches, asphalt paving.

Topography: Contributing features include the elevated overlook, stone retaining walls and stairs. Using the stairs, there is an abrupt descent down from the promenade to the level lower viewing-platform followed by another steep ascent to the overlook using the other stair. The gradual, meandering path that follows the former vehicular cul-de-sac was originally shaped for cars and adapted to pedestrians.

Vegetation: Vegetation frames views of the canyon. Vegetation provides shading for users and screening for those viewing the falls from the opposite side of the canyon. Vegetation also provides a sense of immersion from the promenade into a more natural place beginning at the stairs.

Circulation: Contributing features include pedestrian promenade, south rim trailhead, and the sister set of stone stairs. Asphalt (trademark of Rustic Design) had an unobtrusive quality (dark color, resistance to sun glare, and ability to conform to natural contours). Extant vehicular circulation system flows were established during the 1970 reconstruction.

Views and Vistas: Contributing features include the promenade views, the views from the lower platform and, of course, the

360° views from the overlook. These views are framed by vegetation and sequenced by the extant primary pedestrian circulation system. There are “falls viewing rooms” created by vegetation, boulders and benches along the lower platform. From the eastern edge of the lower platform are impressive downriver views of the Canyon, framed only by vegetation. Views of the Artist Point development are obscured from the opposite side of the canyon through the use of vegetation, indigenous rocks and boulders, naturalistic placement of these rocks and boulders and color, and following the “sacred area” designation along the canyon edge.

Small-scale features: Contributing features include the overlook parapet wall, overlook bench, rhyolite edge along promenade and lower platform, and the split log benches. NPS Rustic used naturalistic placement of stone and boulders, emphasizing irregular spacing and size, mimicking the adjacent rock outcrops.

Spatial Organization: Categorized by zones: vehicular zone (parking area and vehicular drop-off), and the pedestrian zone (promenade, lower platform and upper overlook). The sister-stairs are vertical transitional features between pedestrian subzones.

Land Use: Passive recreation (viewing) and transportation (parking).

Indefinite Delivery-Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) Contract

Planning, compliance and related services contract including cultural and natural resource inventories (outsourcing)

2003 Planning Office Projects (continued)

Fire Management

- EA completed and FONSI signed for Wildland-Urban Interface I (WUI I)
- Initiation of WUI II

Westslope Cutthroat Trout (WCT) restoration

Removal of WCT hybrids and restoration of genetically pure WCT juveniles in tributaries to the Gallatin River in the northwestern corner of the park

Alternative Transportation Program

1. Automatic vehicle identification system at the North and Northeast entrances (mostly complete)
2. Getting the newly purchased snowcoach on-line
3. Old Faithful transportation and circulation study (study to be complete with recommendations by early 2004)
4. Implementing the 511 system
5. Electronic Information Kiosks (WHERE?) (potentially Old Faithful, possible other locations to be determined)
6. Implementing the U.S. 89 Traveler/Weather Information project (Gardiner to Livingston)
7. Northeast Entrance Vehicle Height Detection system (to protect National Historic Landmark building from being hit as it has in the past)

Longer-range Planning Efforts

1. Business Plan (available to public this July)
2. Slough Creek Campground (addresses flooding and streambank restoration)
3. Stephen's Creek Planning to address operations facilities, pronghorn habitat, and visual impacts) (MONTANA PROJECT)
4. Communications Tower/Telecommunications Management Plan (consistency, standards) (to start soon)
5. Weed Management Program – On hold
6. Bechler developed area DCP– On hold
7. Tower Fall Store – EA to be prepared, New store in by 2006 at Tower Junction area near existing gas station
8. Concessions Management Plan – Planning currently on hold, involves parkwide concession upgrades and new facilities
9. Old Faithful Warming Hut – Should be implemented with construction of new Visitor Education Center
10. Old Faithful Warehouse – Proposed to raze existing pub building and construct a new warehouse and recycling center
11. Photoshop OF – proposed to be moved to new location SE of O.F. Lodge and used for Yellowstone National Art Trust.
12. Haynes Cabin OF – Proposed to be moved to new location near Firehole River East of Old Faithful cabins.

2003 Planning Office Projects

Winter Use

- Record of Decision for Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement signed March 2003
- 2 lawsuits since then
- Implementing plan for use of 4-stroke snowmobiles, a requirement that snowmobile groups be guided, and reservation system

Line-item Type Construction

1. Mammoth Courthouse
 - joint funding to construct new Wyoming courthouse proposed across from Post Office in 2005
 - scoping letter to public in 2002
 - in process of writing Environmental Assessment (EA)
2. Canyon Ranger Station and Emergency Services Building (ESB)
 - scoping letter to public in Fall 2002
 - EA will go to public within several weeks
3. Madison Wastewater
 - scoping letter to public in 2002
 - projected start date 2005
4. West Entrance and Contact Station (MONTANA PROJECT)
 - new location 800 feet further in park
 - EA should be out for public review first week of September 2003
5. Mammoth Housing Plan
 - 75 units of in-fill and existing housing in Mammoth and Gardiner
 - EA completed; Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in regional office for signature
6. Old Faithful Visitor Center 2008 (year is yet an approximate date)
 - Funding would be a combination of NPS funds and private donations (fundraising in progress)

Road Improvement Projects (late 2003 and 2004)

1. East Road Entrance (2004)
 - Draft Biological Assessment (BA) to Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) completed
 - Final BA will be completed within several weeks and formal consultation with FWS will begin
 - Constructed scheduled for spring 2004
2. Completion of parkwide road program BA and consultation with FWS (2003 or 2004)
3. Norris to Golden Gate (internal scoping) (project planned for 2007)
4. Canyon Rim Drives (2006)
5. Phase 2 of Madison to Norris (2005)
6. Phase 2 of Dunraven Pass (2005)
7. Preliminary planning for repair or replacement of the Lamar River bridge
8. Any applicable compliance for overlaying the Tower area roads (project planned for 2005)
9. Artist's Point
 - rehabilitation and some redesign of the parking area and pedestrian overlook area, to be conducted along with Canyon Rim Drives road rehabilitation scheduled for 2006.

Character Defining Features



1940

"I Believe it would be well to refrain from holding a definite six-foot width of the stairs, allowing enough variation to break the straight line. Sufficient boulders should be used on the side of the stairs to avoid the lined boulder effect along the sides."

*District Landscape Architect
Howard Baker, 1936*



In constructing the new stairs, care is taken to let vegetation blend the development into the landscape, a trademark of Rustic style.

Character Defining Features (continued)

Large rhyolite boulders were placed vertically or are stacked in no more than two courses. The overall height is not uniform and the top and base of the wall forms an irregular line.



1938 Overlook during construction.



1939 Promenade during construction.