

HARPERS FERRY CENTER

Harpers Ferry Center was established to consolidate the interpretive facilities of the National Park Service. It is responsible for producing all of the museum exhibits, audiovisual programs, graphics and interpretive publications used throughout the National Park System.

From the beginnings of the national park movement, interpretation has been considered one of the primary functions in the administration of the parks. Congress, in establishing Yellowstone National Park in 1872, specified that it was being set aside, "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." And the Park Service has continued to believe that both the preservation of the parks, and enjoyment of all parks, comes through a better knowledge and understanding of park resources. Interpretive activities are carried out in the parks by rangers, naturalists, and historians; but with more than 200,000,000 visitors to the national parks this year, much of the interpretive work must be done through publications, indoor and outdoor museums, slide shows and films.

Either through its own staff and production facilities, or through contracts with private firms, the Harpers Ferry Center provides these needed program materials for all of the parks. The annual production schedule is sizeable: some 25,000,000 information folders are produced for the 300 parks; there are nearly 100 museum and audiovisual programs produced each year. Additionally, the Center provides for the curatorial and preservation work of the Service and is responsible for the care of some 4,000,000 historic artifacts.

Harpers Ferry Center also administers the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park as a "demonstration park" in which new interpretive ideas and techniques are tried out. Although the Mather Training Center is not administratively a part of the Harpers Ferry Center, there is a close working relationship with the Training Center which carries out most of the interpretive training programs for the employees of the National Park Service.

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The Origins of the Interpretive Design Center, With Comments On
The Progress of Interpretation, 1964-1970
William C. Everhart

(This rambling account was dictated to serve as a temporary record of the planning, design and construction of the Interpretive Design Center at Harpers Ferry. It is primarily the result of a promise to have this background information available for the tour leaders at the IDC; it will also serve, presumably, as a stopgap administrative history for the files, since by necessity it goes into the administrative reorganization of interpretation in 1964, along with later events.)

In January 1964 George Hartzog was appointed Director of the National Park Service.

A reorganization plan developed the year before as a part of LRR had recommended the establishment of a new Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services. Hartzog appointed me Chief of this Division in February 1964. This new Division brought together several interpretive activities (publications, AV, museums) which had been scattered throughout the previous organization, reporting to a variety of Assistant Directors.

Publications was then a reasonably well staffed activity; it had been an identified office almost from the beginnings of the Service; the year previously Vince Gleason was brought in to serve as Chief, and had already begun to drastically improve the quality of NPS publications.

The audiovisual activity, in its infancy, was barely functioning. It consisted, as I recall, of Don Erskine and two engineers. Previously, policy direction had been supplied by a committee chaired by Howard Stagner. There were no facilities (or staff) for actual program production. Don Erskine (who had been a radio announcer) did narrations, and the primary workload was recording and syncing slide programs which had been developed by park areas.

Museums also had had a distinguished history in the Park Service. At that time the Eastern Museum Laboratory was located in a tempo building along the Mall in Washington; the Western Museum Laboratory was located in the Old Mint Building in San Francisco. Ralph Lewis, a widely respected museum person, was in charge.

One major problem at that time was that all of these groups were geographically scattered, with each operating independently.

It seemed to me that the newly established Office of Interpretation had two essential objectives right from the beginning. One was to bring in some really professional talents, both to head up and to staff the branches of publications, museums, and AV; the other was to bring all of the people together under one roof.

During 1964 Carl Degen was recruited from Atlanta, where he was in charge of the Protestant Radio-TV Center. He was appointed Chief of the AV Branch and immediately began to recruit production talent. From having no motion picture production capability we quickly began to earn Cine' gold eagle awards.

Although the Branch of Museums had produced an astounding number of museums during the Mission 66 period, up to 8-10 a year there was widespread criticism that all NPS museums looked alike. I shared the belief, although I also recognized the tremendous pressure placed upon the museum design people by the Mission 66 deadlines. I also felt that it was timely to separate the design and production portion of the museum activity from the preservation and curatorial area. Ralph Lewis, who had been Chief of Museums, was asked to take over the curatorial function and Harold Peterson was appointed Chief Curator. At the time Russ Hendrickson was chief of exhibit production for the Department of Agriculture; he had previously been an exhibit designer for NPS. He was now offered the job of Chief of Museums, with the task of upgrading design. Innovative exhibit design became a hallmark for NPS exhibits under Russ.

Marc Sagan had for several years been trying to interest NPS in building a capability for interpretive planning. While we did not have the staff to give to Marc, he was encouraged to develop plans for a future interpretive planning activity.

The second major problem facing the new office was the physical separation of the staffs. Even in Washington people were scattered in several buildings. It was evident that bringing everyone together would achieve two objectives. One - it would increase the economy and effectiveness of our production, and eliminate overlaps such as the two production shops for the museum labs, each fully staffed and fully equipped.

Two - perhaps more importantly, the quality of the product could be greatly improved by bringing together the people who were primarily doing the same thing - communicating ideas. There really isn't that much difference, conceptually, in producing, say, AV programs or museums exhibits. Audiovisual people could be helpful in the

development of museum concepts and vice versa. Graphic artists, separately, were working for museums, and for publications, but isolated from one another.

It seemed to me that our hope for a first class, professional organization hinged on placing all of these people in a single building, and that necessarily, this building could not be a conventional GSA space. It should be the kind of structure which in itself would say something about how the National Park Service feels about interpretation and about good design. It should be noted that the concept of building an interpretive center was originated and as vigorously pushed by Vince Gleason as by anyone else, myself included.

During the time that the idea of an interpretive design center was being discussed, Director Hartzog gave the staff of the new Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services a chance - to attend each of the regional superintendents conferences - being held from the fall of 1964 through the spring of 1965 - and display to the superintendents the kind of AV, exhibit and publication quality we were seeking to achieve. This became a well known, and generally well-received (after the initial shock) "Dog and Pony Show," presented by Degen, Gleason and Everhart.

The strategy of obtaining a new building had to be carefully worked out. Obviously it would not be possible to convince GSA that it should build a new building in the Washington area for our purposes. Dozens of agencies had been waiting dozens of years for this miracle. Nor, if a request for rental space went to GSA, could we hope to get the kind of building we wanted. More likely we could expect a humdrum building unsuited to our purposes.

The building did need to be fairly near Washington, we felt. Most of the people involved were living in and around Washington and the new location should be near enough for them to commute, if they didn't wish to move. Since we could not hope to get Congressional approval to purchase land, the site would have to be on NPS land. Although several sites were considered in the Washington vicinity, the best site seemed Harpers Ferry - for several reasons.

The Mather Training Center was just then getting underway as an interpretive training center. A site on this campus would provide for excellent communications between the people who were producing interpretive programs in the new design center and the interpreters for whom these programs were being produced who would be taking courses at Mather. This would offer productive interchange and help the field and the planners and designers to better understand each others problems and peculiarities.

A location at Harpers Ferry also might be expected to meet with a sympathetic reception from the two West Virginia senators. Jennings Randolph had introduced the original legislation to establish Harpers Ferry National Historical Park; he also introduced the legislation to purchase Storer College to establish the Mather Training Center. Senator Robert Byrd was a member of the Appropriations Committee and strongly supported developments which would improve the economy of West Virginia.

By the end of 1964 the idea of an interpretive center at Harpers Ferry was being discussed by the interpretive staff, and during 1965 I discussed the concept frequently with Director Hartzog, urging that budget consideration be given to the project. It was not, however, until late in the preparation of the 1967 F.Y. budget, in October, 1965, that a meeting was scheduled with the Director to determine whether or not to include this item in the budget.

There was opposition, and not much support, for the proposal. Some felt that it had little chance in Congress, and the money would be lost. Others felt the idea was too grandiose or that the money would be better spent for other things. Since there were a lot of arguments against, the Director asked me to sum up the case for the proposal. I did so, with some passion. George Hartzog heard me out, and I think I remember his response. He simply said, "I'll buy that."

He then called in Harold Smith, who was his programs officer, and asked Smitty what problem there would be in putting an additional item of \$1,000,000 in the 1967 budget. Smitty said there would be no problem, but it would require some "re-structuring." Smitty also suggested, bless him, that instead of using my figure of \$1,000,000; to be safe, and to provide for contingencies, we should make the figure a million and a quarter. GBH agreed, as did I, and it was decided to include in the 1967 budget \$1,250,000 to build an Interpretive Design Center at Harpers Ferry. (Actually, because of budget restrictions Congress asked NPS to request the funds over a two-year period, and \$600,000 was received the first year.)

The \$600,000 was appropriated by July 1, 1966, and the next step was to select the architect - a decision, it should be noted, of even more importance than choosing a wife. It was my feeling that we should go outside the Park Service. In part this was because an architect within the Service who got the job would be subject to a considerable amount of review and leverage from his supervisors. I also felt it was the kind of project, sufficiently attractive, that we could select the best architectural talent in the United States.

During the late summer and early fall of 1966 I made a series of trips for the purpose of interviewing architects. With the help of Vince Gleason I drew up a list of a dozen or so architectural firms, mostly in the area between Washington and Boston, and over a period of several weeks I went "shopping." The architects included: Keyes-Lethbridge, and Hugh Newell Jacobsen, Washington; Cert-Jackson and Charles Moore, Cambridge; John Johansson, New Canaan; The Architects Collaborative, New Haven; Marcel Breuer, I.M. Pei, Paul Rudolph, and Ulrich Franzen, New York City. Franzen was the choice.

The Franzen office was of ideal size, small enough to insure that the principal designer (Franzen) would be personally involved in our project, rather than a staff member. Franzen had just completed The Alley Theater, in Houston, which was one of the significant pieces of theater design, and a campus complex at Cornell, both of which had been greatly admired by architectural critics. (He has since won several gold medal awards from the American Institute of Architects.)

Franzen has a reputation among his architectural colleagues as being an outstanding designer. He has remained small despite his success, and has extremely high standards for the projects that he does. They are of modern design but solidly based in philosophy and he has had a particularly good reputation for staying within budgets.

The only architect on the list who turned down the project was I.M. Pei, who would probably have been my first choice, but who felt unable to take on such a small (\$1,000,000) project.

To give Franzen more time to thoroughly review and study our operation we first executed a small contract for him to prepare what was essentially a master plan for the campus area. This he did as a first step toward the design of the building. Then we signed a contract with him in January of 1967 for the building.

By that time we had produced a program for the building which essentially defined the purpose and function of the building and the philosophy that we were trying to achieve, gave the different kinds of spaces that would be required, the numbers of people who would occupy each and how much space we estimated for each function. (See attached program.)

Franzen assigned as his job captain Keith Kroeger, an equally enthusiastic and skilled architect who worked extremely closely with us the whole way. We were impressed by the fact that both

Franzen and Kroeger made a number of visits to the site, for the purpose of interviewing each of the key people who would be occupying the building, trying to find out what kinds of activities they engaged in, what kinds of spaces they would be needing.

For example, we were required to identify every desk, every chair, every piece of equipment that would be in the new building in order that every person and all of the equipment would be accounted for. It was a thorough and professional job of planning.

In something like 60 days Franzen presented a preliminary design concept which was reviewed and approved. Using this model, Secretary Udall held a press conference which was attended by Senators Byrd and Randolph and Representative Harley Staggers to announce his approval of the design and expressing his belief that it was an outstanding effort. For the next 4 months or more the Franzen office produced the working drawings and specifications. These were received late in the fall of 1966 and reviewed. The final specifications and working drawings were sent out for bid early in 1967.

The opening of the bids is, of course, a momentous time for any project. The building actually had a modest budget. As the design proceeded, the estimates steadily climbed, until we were at the very budget limit. I was exceedingly tense, for I had several conversations with Hartzog, in which he declared that, "If you say we are on the money we're probably over the money, and if we are over the money you are in trouble."

I was sufficiently upset that I did not attend the bid opening, but when the bids were opened there were 8 bids, 7 of which were within the budget. The two lowest bids were less than a thousand dollars apart. It suggested a remarkably good set of specifications and working drawings.

The lowest bid for the approximately 39,000 sq.ft. of gross space was roughly \$890,000, which comes out to approximately \$23 a sq.ft. To my knowledge, this is probably the least expensive building of its kind the Park Service has ever constructed.

Construction began in April of 1968 with a target date of completion in August of 1969. However, due to normal weather delays and material delays, plus a few change orders, completion was postponed until December of 1969. It should also be noted that the change orders for such a large building were almost non-existent. Except for our own decision to redesign and upgrade the kitchen and coffee room and furnish it as part of the construction contract, the change orders amounted to no more than \$15,000 out of an almost

\$900,000 contract. Acceptance of the building from the contractor was in January of 1970 and we began to move in shortly thereafter. We formally began work in the new building in March of 1970 with an open house in June of 1970 for the National Park Service and local residents.

As to the design of the building, the architect had the problem of fitting a new building with the 3 existing buildings of the Mather Training Center - the library, the administrative building and the dormitory. Each of these 3 buildings was built in a different time period, in a different style, and with different materials. Franzen's solution was, first, the use of brick as a basic building material, in keeping with historic Harpers Ferry; second, the use of the concrete plaza in front, which in effect was an attempt to tie together physically the 3 existing buildings to the new building. He also placed the first level of the building, now occupied by Museum Production and AV underground to lower the profile of the building and to reduce its mass. Viewed from the plaza, in association with the other 3 buildings, it is remarkably low and non-bulky.

As a key feature of the building design, it combines the old with the new. The colonnade of arches on the Shenandoah River side of the first floor of the building is a calculated use of the old Harpers Ferry Armory building style. Most of the Armory buildings had a line of brick archways similar to those the Design Center has on the first floor rear. The other two stories of the building are in a modern, clean, simple style. It is the new, resting on the old.

Public reception, particularly the professional reception of the building has been unusually good. An article that appeared shortly after the completion of the building in the American Institute of Architects Journal entitled "The National Park Service Does Well By Architecture" featured the Interpretive Design Center on the front cover.

FOR A
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
BUILDING
AT HARPERS FERRY

A PROGRAM

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT
WHAT THE BUILDING
SHOULD DO

It should:

1. Express by its design National Park Service aspirations in the field of the visual and communication arts.

2. Live in harmony with its neighbors, and its environment.

3. Take maximum advantage of site and view.

4. Serve as a kind of inside-outside structure, inviting employees to enjoy their environment.

5. Tend to bring together the related activities within the building, rather than isolating or separating the functions.

6. Achieve maximum flexibility, to provide for growth, and evolution of functions and staff.

IS THERE MONEY FOR ART

If the budget permits, the design of the building might provide for an art form to be commissioned, which would be a kind of symbol for National Park Service interpretation - a piece of sculpture, a mosaic, a mural, a mobile, a fountain, a patio, or even a piece of landscaping.

Should the budget not permit, the art form and its location might be identified, in order that future development could take place when funds could be obtained.

SPACE THOUGHTS

The suggested space allotments which follow do reflect a careful examination of function and need.

In general, the attempt has been to cut down space requests as far as possible, from an original, much more extensive space program. This program should therefore be considered as the absolute minimum. It is hoped additional space can be provided.

In any case, the total space, and the space allotted to each function, are meant to provide a general guide for the architect, who may well find ways of saving space in some sections, of adding space to others, or who may suggest providing space for additional activities not included in this program.

At this preliminary stage of the program, no effort has been made to identify power and utilities requirements, telephone and PA systems, special safety regulations, etc.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS
By Function

<u>Function</u>	<u>No. Employees</u>	<u>Space Requirements</u>
Lobby, reception, exhibit	1	850
Community Center		1,600
Library	1	600
Headquarters Office	15	3,750
Planning Office	8	1,000
AV Studio & Lab	15	5,000
Studio-Partitioned	20	4,200
Exhibit Graphics (Shop)	10	4,900
Shop	<u>15</u>	<u>7,400</u>
	85	29,300

LOBBY-EXHIBIT

Requirements: Not quite determined, but it seems likely to be used for temporary or traveling exhibitions, possibly for display storage of completed exhibits awaiting shipment, for exhibitions of National Park Service design work - architecture, art, etc., or for a permanent exhibit on the National Park Service.

Certainly, it will be the public entrance to the building, and should provide a swinging introduction.

Location: It will be the public entrance to the building, and will possibly need a receptionist - and movable, or look-through receptionist counter.

COMMUNITY CENTER

Requirements: This should be an attractive, warm space in which people can meet - for a variety of purposes, a couple of which are still unperceived. It should be comfortable, rather than spacious.

It will be used for staff seminars, and for small and large conferences.

It will have an extremely important use as an additional training room, for use by the training center staff.

It will serve as the one room in the building in which all employees can meet, for training, viewing new programs, or other purposes.

It should be usable for film programs - probably with built in projection booth and screen.

It may also be used for evening programs - for employees and families to gather socially and professionally, to hold NPS lecture series, etc.

Location: It should probably be easily accessible from the outside, so that it could be cut off (locked off) from the remainder of the building, and its traffic flow would not disrupt the building operation.

A possibility: If adjacent to the lobby, a movable partition might be the separation allowing for considerable expansion - if acoustically and esthetically sound.

LIBRARY

Requirements: This is not to be a research library (which will in fact be located in another building, for quiet, uninterrupted study). This library is to be a repository of creative reference - the magazines and posters, graphics and maps, historic sketches and illustrations which serve the efforts of publication and exhibit designer and film producer. It is to be a working center, bright, sparkling, and undoubtedly noisy, with table space for laying out, examining and discussing a multitude of possible references.

Wall storage, space for books, periodicals, generous file space for oversize maps, graphics, etc. Here will be stored all used art, for future reference.

Tops of storage files might be designed for lay-out, or table use. Tables perhaps should be adjustable for stand up or sit down use.

Option - could it not serve also as a space conference or seminar room, with addition of chairs, using tables.

Location: Should be accessible to the Studio-partitioned area, as it will be primarily used by exhibit planners and graphic artists.

OFFICE

Requirements: Basically, to achieve attractive, functional space through good design and planning, rather than generosity with space. All furnishings - wall shelves, tables, desks, lighting, window appointments, should be determined as part of space arrangement.

Most offices need not be much more than small "cells" - which can, of course, be attractive and comfortable through well chosen furnishings, by a wall window opening upon an outside view or an interior space or corridor. Covering walls with a rough material upon which things could be tacked might help.

Several kinds of office space are required:

1. Stenographic, including filing.
2. Individual office cells, for administration, editing, writing, etc.
3. Office cells which include some work space.

Location: Some office space is included with individual functions. Remainder to be grouped with Headquarters space.

No. Employees: 15

Director	300
5 Assistants	1,000
Steno & Files	400
2 Conference Rooms	800
Misc. Office	1,250

HEADQUARTERS OFFICE AREA

The theory of office space arrangement for the Director and for his key people in charge of exhibits, publications, AV, planning, etc., is this: To establish within the building a central headquarters, where these people will work in close, daily, elbow-rubbing proximity, in an attempt to achieve chose program coordination of all functions through physical association. This will naturally involve some physical separation of these people from their working staffs, but it should help achieve unity of the total operation.

The Director should have a reasonably generous office with space for small conferences, say 300 sq. ft.

Each of his five or so principal assistants should have an office large enough to allow for small private discussions, at 200 each, say 1,000 total.

Either one good sized conference room, or two smaller conference rooms - or even one which can be divided into two, say a total of 800 sq. ft. Probably two small ones would be best.

No. employees: 8

1,000

PLANNING OFFICE

Requirements: A block of office space for those persons who develop overall interpretive plans for the parks, who help coordinate and establish program objectives for the graphics, film, exhibit and publication programs. These will be modest office cells, with stenographic and file space.

Location: Adjacent to Headquarters.

No. employees: 15

5,200

AV STUDIO AND LAB

Requirements: A number of rather small areas for the various elements of AV production: editing, viewing, tape duplication, storage. In particular, the viewing studio should provide comfortable seating for about 30 people, for film screening. By making it this large, it can serve various purposes, as well as film screening, it will require projection room and perhaps could serve as projection room for the Community Center room.

If a corridor connected these offices and studios it could be put to admirable use in tacking up story boards, etc.

Office:	700	Picture Editing &	
Studio-Photo:	800	Storage Camera:	350
Recording Studio:	200	Tape Dupe Room:	400
Control Room:	300	Storage Vault:	350
Film Editing:	300	Maintenance Shop:	400
Tape Editing:	300	Dark Room:	<u>450</u>
Viewing Studio:	650		
		Total:	5,200

Location: All of these spaces need to be located together, separate from the noise and vibration generated by shop machinery, but with no special relationship to other operations in the building.

No. Employees: 20

Planning:	2,200
Curatorial:	1,000
Graphics:	<u>1,000</u>
	4,200

STUDIO-PARTITIONED

Requirements: Individual partitioned areas for people whose needs are not a desk and bookcase. They are artists who require a drafting board, with perhaps some layout space for reference materials; curators reviewing and cataloging objects; exhibit designers working on plans, consulting with curators and research staff. Total privacy not required, movable partitioning should be considered.

Location: Needs to be close by Exhibit Graphics section, since artists continue to work on exhibits in production or consult with shop people.

No. Employees: 10

Specimen & Photo	
Mounting:	600
Silkscreen, Metal	
Photo, etc.:	1,800
Layout & Assembly:	<u>2,500</u>
	4,900

EXHIBIT GRAPHICS

Requirements: This is open, left-type space, in which shop work items and artifact preservation items are assembled and completed. Such activities are: mounting specimens and photos on exhibit panels, silkscreening, metal photo, etc. Messy business, but clean as compared to the shop.

Well designed storage space, included as a part of the structure, would save substantial space - and elevate the esthetics - of present operation.

Location: Must be adjacent to shop, sculpture and preservation area, possibly with spray booth separating this area from shop.

No. Employees: 15

Production:	4,000
Spray Booth:	500
Diorama and Sculpture:	1,200
Curatorial Workshop:	1,200
Staging:	<u>500</u>
	7,400

SHOP

Requirements: Open, light, left-type space for a shop operation - power tools of many kinds, oven and sinks for preservation lab work, lockers, storage, etc. Spray booth has special safety and venting requirements. This area will require the least "finished" space, with a ceiling high enough to handle 8' lengths of material.

As in the case of Exhibit Graphics, well designed storage space can be designed as a part of the structure, considerable space savings can be achieved over the present operation.

Location: Will be principle area for receiving supplies and materials - up to truck load size, as well as staging area for assembling and shipping out completed exhibits. Must open onto covered loading platform - could trucks drive into shop? Would be great solution. Shop space should adjoin Exhibit Graphics area preferably with spray booth in between.

TERMS OF CONSTRUCTION

Funds for construction of the building are being provided by Congress, in two phases, over two fiscal years: 1967 and 1968. In requesting the first phase funds for the current (1967) fiscal year, it was specified that this appropriation would build a usable facility.

It will therefore be necessary, in designing the total facility, to identify a portion of the structure which can be constructed with present funds, and completed with the second phase appropriation.

It is expected that, in requesting bids for construction, both the first phase and second phase construction will be included. Barring disaster, it is expected funds for the second phase will be made available on July 1, 1967.

Construction Schedule: It will be necessary to complete design, making drawings and specifications in time to award a contract for the first phase of construction on

SPACE SCHEMATIC

29,300

Lobby-
Exhibit
850

H.Q.
Office
3,750

Planning
Office
1,500

Community
Center
1,600

Studio-
Partitioned
3,850

Library
8600

A-V Studios
and
Labs
4,950

Exhibit
Graphics
4,900

Shop
7,400