

106 SUCCESS STORY

NPS and Tribes Collaborate to Protect Heritage, Boost Economy

Arizona



“We share Desert View as a symbol to bond the peoples of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The Watchtower serves as a connection to embrace the heartbeats of our peoples and visitors far and wide with the heartbeat of the canyon ... We are still here.”

—MISSION STATEMENT
Grand Canyon National Park
Inter-tribal Advisory Council

THE STORY

Long recognized as a natural wonder of the world, Arizona's Grand Canyon is 277 miles long, 18 miles at widest point, and one mile deep. Native Americans have inhabited the Grand Canyon and its environs for at least 12,000 years, and 11 tribes continue traditional association today. In the late 1800s, a rail line was built to export copper from mines near the canyon but was sold under foreclosure to the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway (Santa Fe). In 1901, the Santa Fe extended the line to the South Rim and initiated passenger service in order to develop tourism at the Grand Canyon.

The Santa Fe engaged the Fred Harvey Company to build and operate its tourism facilities at the Grand Canyon. In 1901, Mary Colter joined the company and became its chief architect and designer. During her 30-year-career with Fred Harvey, she drew inspiration from southwestern landscapes, and her designs were influenced by the architecture of the ancestral Puebloan people of the Colorado Plateau. Colter designed several buildings for Fred Harvey at the Grand Canyon's South Rim: Hopi House (1905), Hermit's Rest (1914), Lookout Studio (1914), and Desert View Watchtower (1932).

Colter patterned the Desert View Watchtower after several structures at Hovenweep and Mesa Verde's Round Tower. The 70-foot-tall rock tower with a hidden steel structure was completed in 1932. Its internal steel framework was designed and supervised by Santa Fe bridge builders. Colter supervised the exterior and designed features to give the appearance of antiquity such as aesthetic cracks. The first gallery artwork by renowned Hopi artist Fred Kabotie from Second Mesa on the Hopi Reservation represents the physical and spiritual origins of Hopi life.

President Teddy Roosevelt designated the Grand Canyon a National Monument in 1908, and in 1919 Congress designated it a National Park. UNESCO inscribed it in the World Heritage List in 1979. In 1987, the four Colter buildings were designated a National Historic Landmark.

THE PROJECT

For more than 80 years the Watchtower was managed by the Fred Harvey Company (or successors), and years of deferred maintenance affected the structure's exterior mortar

Photos: Above, snorkel lifts position masons during 2010 repointing of Desert View Watchtower; Right, conservator works on designs etched into the parapet of level 4 of the Watchtower. Colorful ceiling mural overhead. (NPS/M. Quinn); side view of entire Watchtower Kiva Room during roof renovation. A wooden framework extends several feet above the top of the roof to create a crawl space for workers. (NPS)

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Photos: From left, a conservator works on details of a Kabotie mural low on the wall (NPS/Mary Sullivan); a view from the Kiva Room roof next to the fireplace chimney, Reflectoscope on the left, and view of the Grand Canyon. (NPS)

joints and caused interior plaster instability. In 2014, the National Park Service (NPS) removed the Watchtower from the concessions contract prospectus, with the goal of restoring the Watchtower and the Desert View area. Shortly after assuming management, NPS assembled a team to assess the damage and oversee restoration.

THE 106 PROCESS

NPS was responsible for complying with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which requires federal agencies to identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the historic property when adverse effects may occur.

In investigating the building envelope, NPS determined moisture had followed steel girders and mortar in the aesthetic cracks had failed. Likewise, Kabotie's artwork needed serious conservation. Recognizing that the restoration work required Section 106 review, NPS staff consulted with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer and the traditionally associated tribes to assess possible pilot treatments, including cleaning the surfaces, consolidating plasters, and overpainting the graffiti. The consultation led the NPS to determine that the selected treatments would not adversely affect the historic property, and work commenced. Along with a dedicated group of consultants, Kabotie's grandson, Ed Kabotie, worked on the project.

THE SUCCESS

The restoration of the Watchtower has adhered to the highest professional standards and has also become a catalyst for redevelopment of the larger Desert View compound into an inter-tribal cultural heritage site. NPS plans to make this one of the first projects to utilize the federal Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience (NATIVE) Act by leveraging the popularity of the Grand Canyon to introduce some of the 6 million annual visitors to Indian Country. Experiencing Desert View will provide an exemplary opportunity for visitors to get closer to Native American heritage. In addition to federal funds, the project has generated millions of dollars in support from non-profit organizations. The Grand Canyon Conservancy, ArtPlace America, American Express Foundation, and the American Indian-Alaska Native Tourism Association are among the largest donors. As NPS and its partners complete the project, the approach they have chosen at the Desert View Watchtower is envisioned to be a national model for NPS and tribal communities collaborating to use tourism to increase sustainable economic development in tribal communities.

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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Section 106 and
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Preserving America's Heritage