

Apollo 11 statue headed to Kennedy Space Center's new Moon Tree Garden



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Apollo 11 statue

A statue of the Apollo 11 astronauts designed by sculptors Mark and George Lundeen and commissioned by Rocket Mortgage is being donated to Kennedy Space Center Visitor's Complex for the 50th anniversary of the moon landing. (Quicken Loans)

The Apollo 11 astronauts who made history 50 years ago 250,000 miles away will be standing larger than life at Kennedy Space Center Visitor's Complex this summer. 1 / 14

A drive to bring the 7-foot-tall bronze figures of Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins has come to fruition with the help of a sponsor, donating the statue to become a centerpiece of the new Moon Tree Garden at the visitor complex Apollo/Saturn V Center.

Rocket Mortgage, which is run by Quicken Loans, commissioned the statue, which was created by Colorado-based sculptors George and Mark Lundeen.

An Apollo 11 statue by Mark and George Lundeen is being donated to Kennedy Space Center Visitor's Complex. The statue was commissioned by Rocket Mortgage.

“We are grateful to Rocket Mortgage for bringing this commemorative statue to Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex as we prepare to mark one of the most important anniversaries in the history of the United States space program,” said Therrin Protze, chief operating officer of the visitor complex. “The dynamic statue is indeed the perfect tribute to these early pioneers who forever changed the history of space and interplanetary travel.”

The statues will be unveiled by July 16, 50 years since the three astronauts blasted off from Kennedy Space Center on their historic lunar mission.

“The crux of this is we’ve got these three guys in their spacesuits,” said George Lundeen. “They’ve got their helmets off and they’re looking up at the moon. So it’s an interesting thing to give composition to, to have all three of them work together.”

One of Lundeen’s previous astronaut sculptures - of Apollo 13 astronaut Jack Swigert - caught the eye of documentary filmmaker Steven C. Barber, who then reached out to them with the idea to create a new one for the moon landing. Barber has been filming the statue-making process for a new documentary that will include its creation and unveiling. At the same time, Barber reached out to Delaware North, the company that runs Kennedy Space Center Visitor’s Complex, to hunt for a sponsor.

[Documentarian's space vision to put Apollo 11 crew statue at Kennedy Space Center »](#)

“At the end of the day, who wouldn’t want to be on the greatest technological achievement in the history of man,” Barber said.

Quicken Loans came on board to fund the \$750,000 piece and get what the Lundeen’s need to produce it in time. “They’ve stepped up, and they said anything we need to go, we’ve got it,” George Lundeen said. Mark Lundeen said the team usually asks for at least nine months to complete just one statue, but the timetable on this was cut to six months, and for not one, but three. The finishing touches, though are being put on this week for its arrival to the visitor’s complex in July. “This was a pretty easy decision to make,” said Mark Lundeen. “We all liked what we were going after and we all had the same vision.”

The statues will stand atop a 4-foot-tall concrete base, and be at the center of a new Moon Tree Garden, featuring 12 new trees to replace Kennedy Space Center's original moon tree, which was knocked over during Hurricane Irma in 2017. The original, a sycamore planted in 1976 during the country's bicentennial celebrations, grew out of one of hundreds of seeds brought to the moon during the Apollo 14 mission by astronaut Stuart Roosa, who had worked as a smokejumper for the U.S. Forest Service prior to joining NASA.

Second-generation seeds, to create what NASA calls half-moon trees, were donated to the visitor's complex by Roosa's daughter, Rosemary Roosa, head of the nonprofit Moon Tree Foundation. The 12 new trees symbolize the 12 crewed missions to the moon of the Apollo program. That's also how many men have walked on the moon.

In addition, visitors to the Apollo/Saturn V Center will be able to take in a new projection mapping presentation that will be cast on the side of the massive Saturn V rocket that hangs suspended horizontally at the space center. Also coming are updates to existing exhibits and the addition of a 1960s-era living room and bar to mimic what it was like when people watched the actual moon landing on July 20 half a century ago.

Those updates will be revealed in a July 15 opening followed by other events leading up to the 50th anniversary of the landing July 20 and a final welcome home event on July 24, the day the Apollo 11 astronauts returned to Earth.

“You know it's something where we have the intelligence, the manpower, the willpower. Everyone was working on this project,” George Lundeen said. “You look at the moon up today and ask yourself, ‘Wasn't that incredible?’ I mean the guys actually went up there and stepped on the moon and that was 50 years ago and that was only 60 years after we learned to fly the first time. Amazing thing.”
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