On the grounds of Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida, engines growled to life as hulking equipment moved into place.

The former Mercury Mission Control Center building -- long ravaged by time and the elements -- was set for demolition.

Looking like angry beasts from a science fiction movie, the heavy equipment consumed the structure bit by bit, until nothing was left but the slab where it stood.

As pieces of the old building were eaten away, more than fifty years of space history came to completion.

The teams who guided the United States' first space pioneers did so from this unassuming structure built in the late 50s.

All of NASA’s Mercury flights and the first three launches of the Gemini Program were
controlled from the facility.

In the end, the demolition came many years after the building's glory faded and its position as a tourist stop ended.

Yet despite the demise of the building, the Flight Control Area -- the heart of the mission control operation -- has been faithfully preserved for future generations.

The Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex has recreated the control center in its Early Space Exploration display.

In this display, the public can view the actual consoles, furnishings and world tracking map used during those early flights.

The preservation stands as a tribute to those who pioneered NASA's manned space program -- leading to the moon missions just a few years later -- and paving the way for the human spaceflight program that continues today.