

# Legacy of the New York State Pavilion

*This history was compiled by **Bill Young** for his website nywf64.com as a comprehensive history of the 1964 - 1965 New York World's Fair at Flushing Meadows park. We present here a shortened background of the New York State Pavilion from nywf64.com.*



*Above a huge "Tent of Tomorrow," housing state exhibits and shows, rise three towers, one of them an observation tower 226 feet high.*

Various displays are sheltered under the world's largest suspension roof, made of translucent colored plastic and hung from sixteen 100-foot concrete columns. On the main floor the Texaco Oil Company has inlaid a mammoth map of the state in terrazzo, and here visitors assemble to watch school and community groups perform. Near-by is a movie theater-in-the-round.

**HIGH SPOT OF THE FAIR.** Glass-enclosed "Sky-Streak" elevators zip up the sides of the observation tower and its lower neighbor, where refreshments are served; on a clear day visitors can see much of the metropolitan area. A third tower is a lounge for visiting dignitaries.

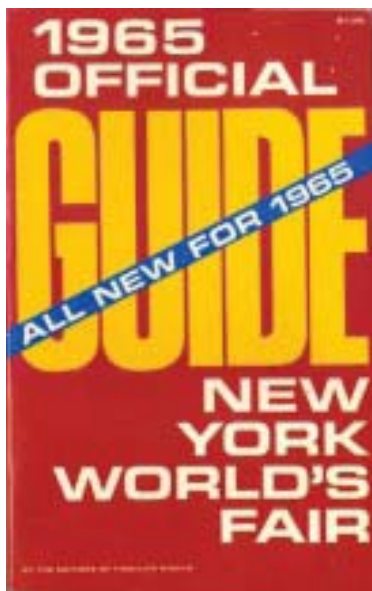
**FINE ARTS.** The New York State Council on the Arts presents an exhibit entitled "The City: People and Places," featuring works of art of the past 75 years.

**PLENTY OF POWER.** A big map of the State Power Authority network and a model of the St. Lawrence hydroelectric plant are on view.

**HIGHWAY OF NEW YORK.** The mezzanine is lined with glimpses of life in the state -- a conservation area, industrial exhibits and so on.

**POP ART.** On the outer walls of the Theaterama are paintings and sculptures of such unlikely subjects as an auto wreck, the Statue of Liberty and a comic-strip redhead.

**MOVIE TOUR.** On a 360° screen in the Theaterama, the visitor is given a spectacular film tour of the state.



*This description of the New York State Pavilion comes from the 1965 World's Fair Official Guide Book.*

Under New York State's Tent of Tomorrow  
- a big Texaco Map -  
- and the displays of the host state -

Architect Philip Johnson's massive pavilion  
of concrete columns and soaring towers  
struggles to survive into the 21st century



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## NEW YORK GOES TO THE FAIR



### GOVERNOR ROCKEFELLER DRIVES FIRST PILE FOR OBSERVATION TOWER OF HOST STATE'S EXHIBIT

Governor Nelson D. Rockefeller drove the first pile in the 200-foot high observation tower of the New York State pavilion from which millions will have a sweeping view of the Fair's 646-acre site.

At the ceremonies held on October 9th, Lieutenant Governor Malcolm Wilson, who is chairman of the New York State Commission on the World's Fair, also revealed for the first time plans for the state's \$5,000,000 installation.

*Governor Nelson D. Rockefeller drives the first pile in the 200-foot high observation tower of the New York State pavilion. Left to right: President of the Fair Robert Moses, Mrs. Paul Peabody, Lt. Gov. Malcolm Wilson, Judge John Lomenzo, and Governor Rockefeller*



Conceived as the "County Fair of the Future," the installation will combine the activity and the excitement of the traditional local fair with a dramatic and unique architectural treatment that envisions a world of tomorrow.

Consisting of three principal structures, the exhibit will include a theatre, a "Tent of Tomorrow," three observation towers, the tallest of which will be the highest point in the World's Fair grounds.

The "Tent of Tomorrow" will be the heart of the state exhibit. An elliptical shaped, 350-foot by 250-foot structure, whose outer support will be sixteen 100-foot tall, white concrete columns, the Tent will feature the world's largest suspension roof.

At the groundbreaking ceremony which was attended by various members of the New York State World's Fair Commission, Robert Moses, president of the Fair, greeted Governor Rockefeller and Lieutenant Governor Wilson and presented them with silver World's Fair Souvenir Medallions.

Following the presentation, governor Rockefeller, Lieutenant Governor Wilson, Mr. Moses and other members of the official group proceeded to the state's site where the three officials spoke briefly to the assembled workers and guests. Governor Rockefeller then tripped a valve, activating the pile driver, and the Fair's tallest structure was underway.

The Thompson-Starrett Construction company is building the "County Fair of the Future," which was designed by Philip Johnson.

*Architect's rendering of the New York State pavilion being built at Flushing Meadow for the New York World's Fair, showing the theatre (circular building on lower left), the flag-bedecked "Tent of Tomorrow" and the three observation towers.*



Source: FAIR NEWS Official Bulletin of the New York World's Fair 1964/1965  
Vol. 1, No. 5 - October 16, 1962

## Building the New York State Pavilion



*Construction on New York State Pavilion  
Progress Report #6, September 12, 1962*



*Foundation work is underway for the New  
York State Pavilion  
Progress Report #6, September 12, 1962*

# Building the New York State Pavilion

*Continued...*

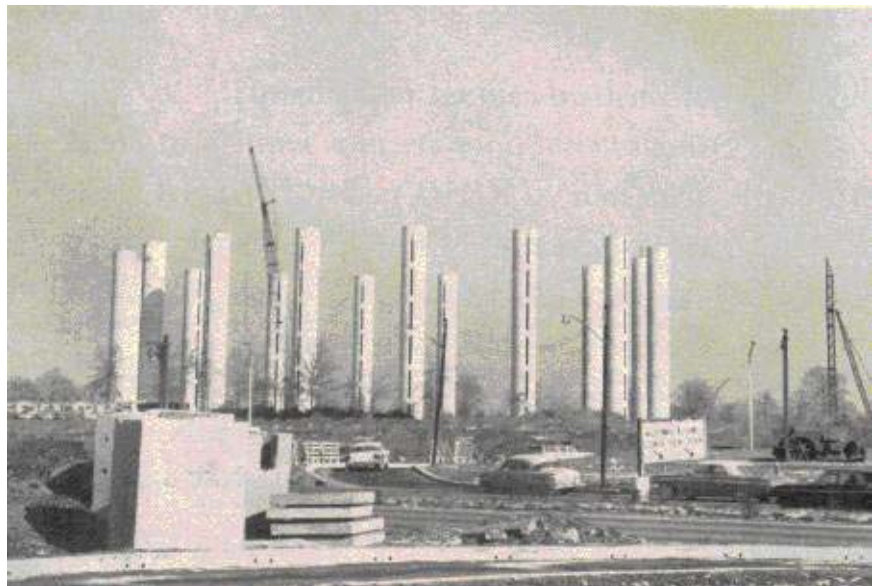


*The first four 100-foot white concrete columns for the Tent of Tomorrow are in place. There will be sixteen in all for the host state's pavilion. FAIR NEWS, December 20, 1962*



*Columns as viewed from the Westinghouse Site Progress Report #7, January 24, 1963*

SLIDING FORMS MAKE  
REVOLUTIONARY  
BUILDING METHODS  
POSSIBLE



The Nicholson Company, one of the nation's leading engineer/contractor firms for almost 50 years, is used to the unusual challenges presented by the architect's design and the client's demands. And the New York State World's Fair Pavilion designed by Philip Johnson is no exception. In each of three stages, during the dead of winter, these mighty concrete columns -- reaching 100 feet in height -- were continuously poured in 5 days by the renowned Nicholson slip form method. The results: 16 attractively textured monolithic concrete structures.

Today Nicholson stands ready and able to provide outstanding services to architects and owners designing and building beautiful and utilitarian contemporary buildings. Speed and economy is assured by utilizing Nicholson's specialized techniques in the construction of the "cores" of high-rise buildings for containment of all services, including elevating and stairs.

For Nicholson there are no building problems -- only building challenges.

THE NICHOLSON COMPANY | 10 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA | NEW YORK 20, N. Y.

Source: Nicholson Company advertisement

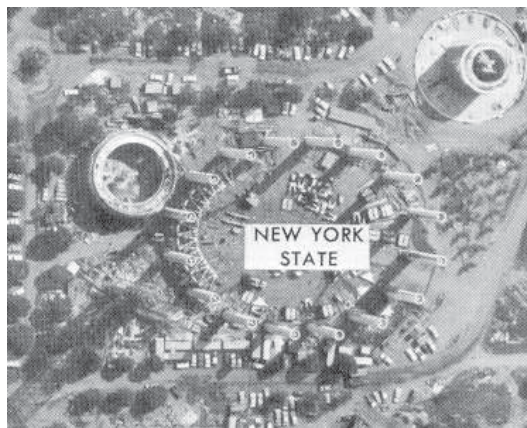
Source: Architectural FORUM, June, 1963, Vol. 118, No. 6

# Building the New York State Pavilion

*Continued...*



*Interior Construction on New York State  
Progress Report #9, September 26, 1963*



*Aerial View of construction on New York State  
Progress Report #9, September 26, 1963*

## **CONSTRUCTION FACT SHEET NEW YORK STATE EXHIBIT 1964-65 WORLD'S FAIR November 18, 1963**

### **PAVILION**

The roof is supported by cables suspended from a steel truss compression ring to a steel tension ring in the center. The weight of the structural steel is 2,000 tons.

The shape of the Pavilion roof, steel truss, supporting columns, and promenade is an ellipse. The major axis of the ellipse at the steel truss is 305' and the minor axis is 225'.

There is an upper and lower suspended cable system composed of 48 cables for each system. The cable size varies from 1-11/16" to 2-1/4" diameter.

The compression ring is supported on 16 needle beams cantilevered from 16 concrete towers. Each tower is 98' high above the ground and was constructed by the slipform system. The outside diameter of each tower is 12' and the walls are 1' thick. The pile cap for each tower is supported on 50 wooden piles.

The roof is made of 1500 2-3/4" Kalwall structural plastic sandwich panels, consisting of a top and bottom skin of fiberglass on an aluminum grid system. The roof is translucent and is composed of 4 colors.

### **MEZZANINE**

The promenade walkway will be 15' above the ground. The outer perimeter is elliptical in shape and the inner is a circle of 190' diameter.

There are 28 steel bents supporting the steel framed deck. The deck is reinforced concrete.

# Building the New York State Pavilion

## *Continued...*

### OBSERVATION TOWERS

3 reinforced concrete Observation Towers

	Top of Steel
Height of tower No. 3 above ground	226'
Height of tower No. 2 above ground	181'
Height of tower No. 1 above ground	85'

Each tower has an outside diameter of 12'-8" and the tower walls are 16" thick.

Structurally, the towers are prestressed by means of the Stressteel post-tensioning system.

Each Observation Tower platform is a steel platform 64' diameter suspended by cables from overhead cantilevered girders.

The foundation for the three towers is a large 7' thick pile cap supported by 207 steel pipe piles. The concrete work for the towers is by the slipform system, accomplished in three increments. The rate of slip is between 12" to 18" per hour.

The height of each platform above the ground is:

Platform No. 1	65'	(Tower No. 1)
Platform No. 2	160'	(Tower No. 2)
Platform No. 3	191'	(Tower No. 3)
Platform No. 4	216'	(Tower No. 3)

### THEATERAMA

Outside Diameter	100'
Height	44'
Structure	Reinforced Concrete
Finish	Architectural Concrete
Vol. Concrete	1,600 C.Y.
Roof	Laminated Wood Roof
Piles	445
Partitions	Concrete Block
Hung Ceiling - Basement	Plaster
Hung Ceiling - Main Room	1" Sprayed Acoustic Asbestos
Circular (360o) Picture Screen	80' Diameter - 20' High
Wood Treatment	Red Oak
Air Conditioned Theater	

# Yesterday - At the Fair



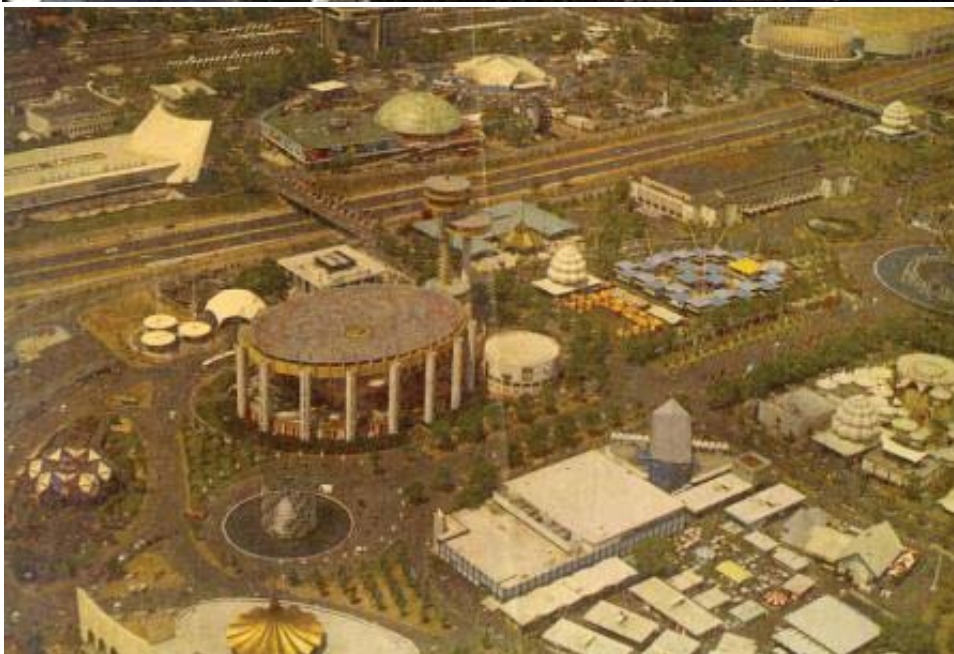
In February, 1965 a committee was appointed by Mayor Wagner to help determine which structures should be kept in post-Fair Flushing Meadow Park. They recommended retention of the New York State Pavilion as a part of a restored Flushing Meadow - Corona Park noting that the towers constituted a natural tourist attraction and the main pavilion could provide a covered area for Park events.

Sadly, thirty-six years later, the New York State Pavilion is a decaying hulk, abandoned and neglected by a City and Parks Department that once felt there was so much promise in this beautiful building.

The old cliché says pictures speak a thousand words. May the photos on this Gallery and the Galleries to follow speak volumes.



*New York State welcomes the World at the 1964/1965 New York World's Fair, April 1964*  
Source:  
*ROLOC Color Transparency*



## *FAIR FROM THE AIR*

*YOU'RE UP in a NEWS airplane cruising over the Fair with our flying cameraman and you happen to look out of the window just as he snaps his picture. This is the record of what you both see. Central to the panorama are New York State's vivid Tent of Tomorrow, Theaterama and High Spot of the Fair (for once this tower looks dwarfed) and, to the right, New Jersey's blue-topped pagodas. Across the top: Transportation Area; at bottom a strip of the International Area.*

*Source: Airview from News Plane by Edmund Peters; Al DeBello, Pilot, New York Sunday News, May 2, 1965*

# Yesterday - At the Fair

## *Continued...*



*Aerial view of New York State  
Source: New York World's Fair Corporation  
Post Fair Engineering Report*



*New York State's unique Tent of Tomorrow  
and High Spot of the Fair beacons brightly.  
Source: General Electric Color photo, New  
York Sunday News, April 25, 1965*



*New York State at dusk  
Source: Personal Collection, © Copyright  
2000, Bradd Schiffman*



# Yesterday - At the Fair Continued...



*The NY State Observation Towers framed by the Fair's streetlights  
Source: Personal Collection, © Copyright 2000, Bradd Schiffman*



*Stunning night lighting at NY State Pavilion  
Source: United Airlines Promotional Slide*

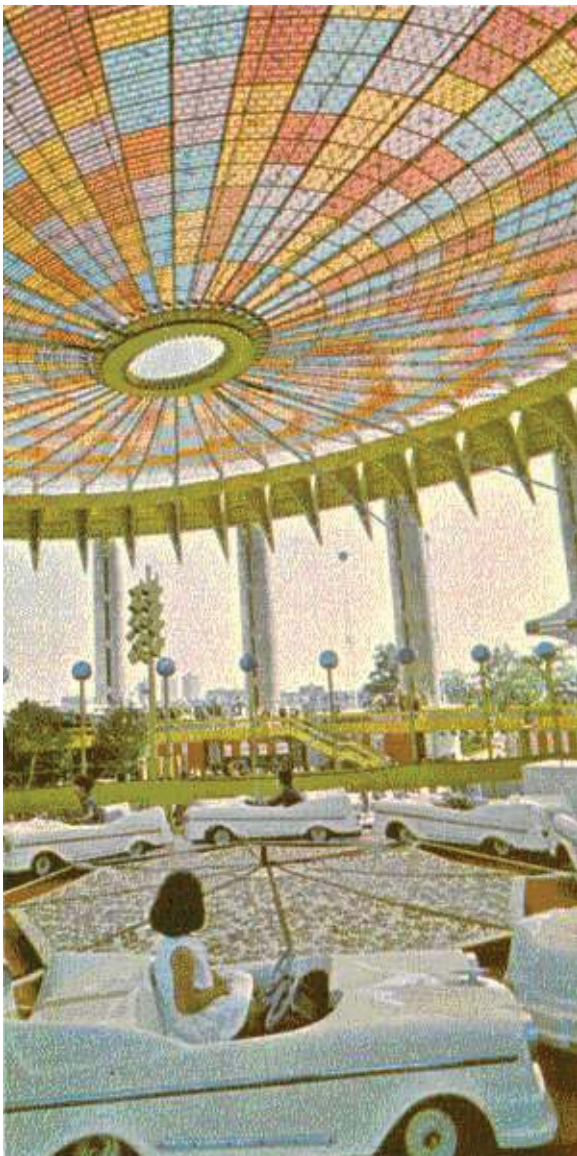
*A Lockheed Constellation (TWA? Eastern?), on final approach to LaGuardia, passes overhead.  
Source: World's Fair Publicity Photo, Courtesy Bradd Schiffman*



# The "Tent of Tomorrow"



The New York State Pavilion. Source: Official Postcard, Dexter Press, West Nyack, NY



Interior roof appearance.

Source: "To the Fair" Stills Courtesy Bradd Schiffman

Interior of the New York State Pavilion "Tent"  
Source: 1965 World's Fair Publicity Pamphlet,  
"What's Free at the Fair"

# The "Tent of Tomorrow" *Continued...*



*Interior roof appearance.*

*Source: "To the Fair" Stills Courtesy Bradd Schiffman*

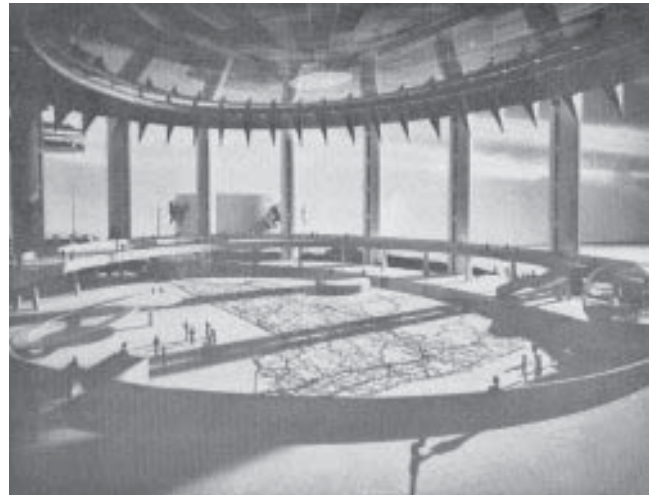


*Interior of the New York State Pavilion "Tent of Tomorrow"*

*Source: Personal Collection, © Copyright 2000, Ray Dashner*

# The Largest Map of New York State

## The World's Largest Map at the World's Largest Fair



*A TRUE SCALE MODEL of the New York State Pavilion at the World's Fair gives an accurate impression of how much of the main floor area is covered by the giant map. The brightly colored road guide is constructed of polished terrazzo and weighs 114 tons.*

*FAR ABOVE Cayuga's waters a tourist has one foot in the lake without getting the sole of his shoe wet. World's Fair visitors can walk the length and breadth of the Empire State in a matter of minutes, selecting the best routes to take and sights to see.*

Visitors to the New York State Pavilion of the World's Fair will be able to make pedestrian highway tours of the Empire State on a giant (130 feet by 166 feet) terrazzo replica of Texaco's road map.

The main floor of the host State's pavilion shows every major road, community, river and lake in the same style as the folded maps that are found in the family car. The familiar red, green and blue markings are all depicted in perfect scale on a beige background.

Constructed of 567 gleaming 16-foot squares, the mammoth map weighs 114 tons and is one of the most extensive terrazzo projects ever undertaken. According to Rand McNally and Company, it is the largest known representation of any 50,000 square mile area of the earth's surface.

THE LONG TASK of designing, building and installing the huge step-on map began in mid-1963. To provide patterns, sections of the Texaco map, each measuring  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch square, were magnified 64 times and electrically projected on 4-foot-square paper templates tacked to a wall. A team of Yale University Art School students then traced every map-marking onto the templates.

From these completed templates plywood pattern boxes were built and taken to a tile factory where the tinted terrazzo mix of cement and marble chips was poured in. Color pigments were added to the mixture to depict land areas, rivers and lakes, and highways. Plastic strips were inlaid to duplicate words and symbols and, after the mixture had hardened, each panel was mechanically polished to a

# The Largest Map of New York State *Continued...*

mirror finish.

UPON DELIVERY at the New York State Pavilion, the 567 panels were placed on individual beds of sand and concrete reinforced with steel mesh. Special suction-cup lifts were used to move each 400-pound panel into its position in the huge mosaic.

The scale of the map is so large that even local landmarks could be recognized if they were placed on it.

Children who have read "Gulliver's Travels" may be reminded of Lilliput. A youngster four feet tall who stands on the map would find that, according to the map's scale, his height would be over 50,000 Lilliputian feet.

Source: New York State Education Magazine, June 1964



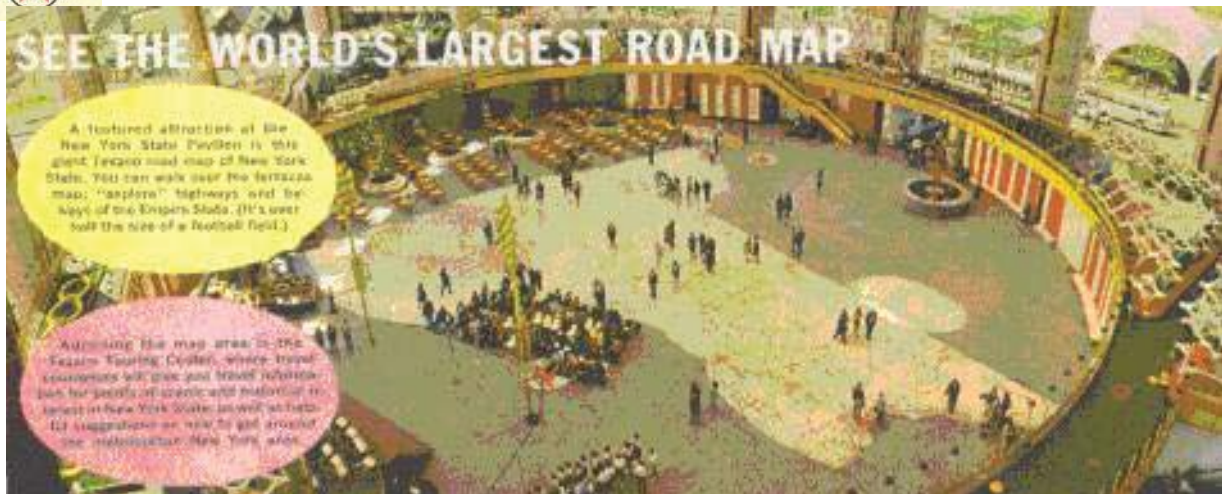
Texaco Road Map of New York State Featuring the NYS Pavilion:

## See the World's Largest Road Map

A featured attraction at the New York State Pavilion is this giant Texaco road map of New York State. You can walk over the terrazzo map; "explore" highways and byways of the Empire State.

(It's over half the size of a football field.)

Trust your car to the  
man who wears the star



Source:  
Texaco  
1965 New  
York State  
Roadmap

# The Largest Map of New York State *Continued...*



*A young girl drives her car on the World's Largest Map underneath the "Tent of Tomorrow"  
Source: National Geographic Magazine, April 1965, Vol. 127 No. 4*

# The Towers



Source: Personal Collection, ©  
Copyright 2000, Bradd Schiffman



Source: Official Post Card, Dexter Press, West Nyack, NY



Source: New York World's Fair Publicity Photo



Source: United Airlines Promotional Slide

# Quotes about the New York State Pavilion

## **Yesterday-**

The pavilion to be built on this site will stand as testimony to other efforts, hand-in-hand with Fair officials and industry. The structure's nobility and grace will testify to the art of its famous architect, Philip Johnson, and to the skill and hard work of the men who will erect it.

Governor Nelson D. Rockefeller  
Remarks made at Groundbreaking for NY State Pavilion  
October 9, 1962

## **Today-**

It's so neglected that when it burns out, sometimes it takes weeks to relamp the anti-collision light at the top of the tower warning inbound flights into LaGuardia.

Ken Thalheimer  
Posting to nywf64.com Message Board  
August 3, 2000

## **Yesterday-**

The New York State Building, built by the State of New York, is strongly recommended by the World's Fair Corporation for retention in the Post-Fair Park. We believe the towers of this structure constitute a natural tourist attraction. Moreover, the theater would be ideal for the Marionette theater and its related workshop, which are now inadequately accommodated in Central Park. The pavilion or tent would provide a covered area for athletic events, dancing and concerts similar to those which have proved so popular as part of the New York State Exhibit.

The Mayor's Committee  
Post-Fair Engineering Report...Flushing Meadow  
July 23, 1965

## **Today-**

I don't know what the hell went on with that Pavilion but it is a crying shame in its current state. The New York City Parks Department had no problem in placing one of its medallions on the highest tower. Now they should do something more than that!

Mary Ellen Coghlan  
Posting to nywf64.com Message Board  
July 23, 2000

## **Today-**

The New York State Pavilion can and should be saved. It can serve its original purpose as an open air observation tower (there are none in Queens if memory serves). Its already adjacent to the Queens Theater, which seems to be doing pretty well on its own. While it would be an expensive endeavor, no one seems to understand why it was shut down in the first place. The tent area could be used during



# Quotes about the New York State Pavilion *Continued...*

the summer as a concession stand of sorts, with perhaps a microcosmic summary of the history of the pavilion.

Fredrick Gilmore  
Posting to nywf64.com Message Board  
July 22, 2000

## **Yesterday-**

Four Fair pavilions - Denmark, IBM, New Jersey and Spain - were awarded citations for excellence in design by the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Honorable mentions were given to Chrysler, Ireland, Maryland, New York State, Scott Paper, Venezuela and Westinghouse.

1965 Official Guide Book  
New York World's Fair  
April 21, 1965

## **Today-**

While it is true that money could possibly save it, the source of money is the question. Private funds probably are the only way to pay for the expensive restoration needed, and one could expect very little return on such an investment. The problem is, if the building were to remain as a cultural center, and most of it is "open" to the elements, what could you possibly put in there? Maybe concerts, some art shows. But all of it would be on a limited basis. I'm afraid the same scenario of the Amphitheater ... is going to happen to the NYS Pavilion -- wait [until] it falls apart then demolish it.

Charles Aybar  
Posting to nywf64.com Message Board  
July 18, 2000

## **Today-**

The NYS pavilion is the only remaining building left from the Fair that is not really used (except for the theatre; the main part does not). So there it stands as a ghostly reminder to what was. Other structures such as the NYC building and the Science building are in operation today. But the NYS pavilion sits rotting away, chained up. The elevator sits perched half way up the tower in its original state (someone smashed the window within the last 2 years).

Ken Lahey  
Posting to nywf64.com Message Board  
May 3, 2000

## **Yesterday-**

The New York State Pavilion ... somehow captured, without belittling, the spirit of public assembly for entertainment; a walk-in, walk-out canopy connected to some observations towers; for all its decoration and high style, truly simple and truly an example of Mies van der Rohe's pronouncement, "less is more." Architect Philip Johnson and Governor Nelson Rockefeller deserve the credit for seeing through this affirmation of people's importance and noble character, amid denial and doubt.

# Quotes about the New York State Pavilion *Continued...*

Lost New York  
Nathan Silver, Author  
1967

## **Today-**

I for one would like to see this hulk of a building brought back to its original glory. But there is something about this building that gives it a ghostly presence ... the fence, the chipping candy stripe paint. The broken elevator looming above on the tower, frozen for 30 years. I visit there at least once a year and each year it looks worse. The only thing you can count on is an abandoned car either inside or outside. (How do they get it inside?)

Ken Lahey  
Posting to nywf64.com Message Board  
July 30, 2000

## **Yesterday-**

Harrison and Abramovitz's Hall of Science was also preserved, as was Philip Johnson's New York State Pavilion, which was actually built as a temporary structure, but was kept because it was too expensive to demolish.

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Designation List 263 LP-1925.  
Footnotes #20 page seven  
May 16, 1995

## **Today-**

There are currently no plans to restore or tear down the New York State Pavilion at this time as the cost for either procedure is prohibitive. The building is checked for structural stability every six months and is currently passing all safety standards.

Estelle Cooper, Assistant Commissioner  
eMail to Bruce Mentone  
August 18, 2000

## **Today-**

One possible new use would be as a cultural area under what used to be the "Tent of Tomorrow." [It] could be made into an outdoor theater/musical venue similar to Belvedere Theater in Central Park. The "tent" itself would have to be restored. The theater itself could perhaps house expanded space for the Queens Museum. Another opportunity for a new use could come if the City wins the bidding for the 2012 Olympic Games. As Shea Stadium and the National Tennis Center are included in the proposal already, the NYS pavilion could be renovated as a venue for one/several of the many smaller sports in the Olympics -- handball, judo, etc.

Gene Brennan  
Posting to nywf64.com Message Board  
April 30, 2000

**Yesterday-**

We believe it is no exaggeration to say that two World's Fairs have produced here in the very center of New York, on the scene of a notorious ash dump, one of the very great municipal parks of our country.

Robert Moses

Post-Fair Engineering Report ... Flushing Meadow

July 23, 1965

**Today-**

I have thrilled to sights, sounds, and rotting smells of The Fountain of the Planets [at today's Flushing Meadow Park]. Its condition is indicative of a city that has lost the capacity to take care of itself. You don't know how embarrassing it is to bring people from out of state to see things in person they have only seen in pictures. You take them to Flushing Meadow Park to look at the old Fair structures, and they swear "Beneath the Planet of the Apes" was filmed on location there. I have ventured several times up to Seattle to visit the Space Needle and what was left over from their 1962 Fair. Needless to say, the Space Needle is in great shape. The grounds are kept up, and their Hall of Science runs like the one in NY does. Hopefully there are people of influence out there who will come to their senses and see that restoration and a connection to the past is a good thing.

Fredrick Gilmore

Posting to nywf64.com Message Board

August 8, 2000