

The New York LDS Historian

New York 1964 World's Fair: Mormonism's Global Introduction

By Taylor Petrey

The 1964-1965 World's Fair was held at Flushing Meadows Park in Queens, the same site as New York's 1939 World Fair. Unlike most international exhibitions, the 1964 Fair ran two years, from April 22 to October 18, 1964 and from April 21 to October 17, 1965 – a total of 360 days. The Fair featured 140 pavilions on 646 acres, including 36 foreign pavilions. Remnants of the fair still stand today, as do parts of its culture: the Walt Disney song, "It's a Small, Small World" was introduced there.

Another memorable feature of the Fair was the participation of religious bodies, including Catholics, Protestants, Christian Scientists, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), sponsors of the 'Mormon Pavilion.' Participation in the Fair was the LDS Church's first attempt to gain global media attention.

Through participation in the Fair, the Church developed a 'classic' Mormon film, adopted an icon that is now commonplace, and changed the face of missionary work in New York City and in the Church as a whole. Involvement in the Fair symbolized the Mormons' shift from a provincial Utah organization to a worldwide church. But without the persistence of New York's Stake President and an ideal city setting, the LDS Church may have missed the proselytizing opportunity of the century.

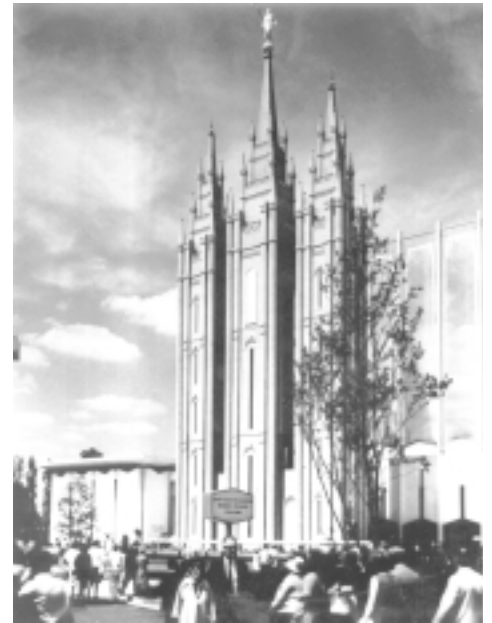
The Pavilion That Almost Wasn't

In early 1961, New York Stake President Stanley McAllister sent a letter to the First Presidency of the LDS Church in

Salt Lake City recommending that the Church participate in the upcoming World's Fair in New York City. As a young missionary, McAllister served in the city and understood first-hand how difficult it was to teach people who had no clear idea of the Church.

McAllister knew that in similar past expositions, the Church rented small booths where people could stop and request information. This time, though, McAllister didn't want a simple booth. He wanted something that would attract media attention. In fact, McAllister wanted a site large enough for an entire building, a pavilion similar to the Catholics and, later, the Christian Scientists.¹ He worked tirelessly by means of letters, trips and phone calls to convince leaders that the Church should do something substantial.

On June 8, 1962, he was finally able to speak with Elder Mark E. Peterson of the Church Information Service which handled Church public affairs at the time. Elder Peterson asked for recommendations and President McAllister said the Church should build a pavilion on a site provided free of charge by the World's



Mormon Pavillion

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is the quarterly newsletter of the New York New York Stake LDS History Committee. This newsletter contains articles about and notices of the research of the Committee.

More detailed research results are found in our monograph series. Monographs will be announced in future issues of the New York LDS Historian.

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New York's Hispanic Membership

Overview of LDS Church History in Brooklyn

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Fair. Still, the Church seemed to be in favor of a small booth.

Weeks passed and McAllister received no official word either way. Meanwhile, the choice Fair sites were disappearing. On

tions. Then, a close friend of McAllister who knew Robert Moses (an important city official and president of the New York World's Fair) persuaded Moses to give the Church its second choice. On October 19, 1962, President David O

Weeks passed and McAllister received no official word either way. Meanwhile, the choice Fair sites were disappearing. On August 20, 1962, the World's Fair Operations Department told Church officials they had to make a decision or they would not be able participate in the Fair at all.

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August 20, 1962, the World's Fair Operations Department told Church officials they had to make a decision or they would not be able participate in the Fair at all. Alarmed, President McAllister personally phoned the President of the Church, David O. McKay, to explain the situation. The next day President McKay approved the project to build a pavilion.² Financial support was also guaranteed – despite the estimated cost of close to three million dollars.³ Such a commitment was unprecedented, and the organizers of the Church's pavilion were advised by the Presidency of the Church to 'do the job right.'⁴

A Second-Choice Site

Once the plan to build the pavilion was approved, choosing an appropriate site was the next item on the agenda. Because of the delay in deciding whether to sponsor a pavilion, the Church lost its first choice of sites, and the top choices were already promised to other organiza-

McKay signed the official agreement to participate in the Fair.

Management of the pavilion was under Bernard P. Brockbank, an Assistant to the Council of the Twelve. The Assistant Manager of the pavilion was Wilburn West, the President of the Eastern States Mission. Harold B. Lee of the Council of the Twelve was the Executive Director and Elder David Evans was the Coordinator of Exhibits. Upon signing, pavilion organizers thought their Fair neighbors would be a cluster of food stands with a reputation for being a messy eyesore. However, the vendor soon went bankrupt, leaving a vacant lot next door. Church leaders worked with Fair officials to turn the lot into a beautiful garden setting. Brother Irvin T. Nelson eventually won an award from the American Association of Nurserymen for his outstanding landscaping on the project.⁵

The elimination of the food stand made the Church's location even more advantageous. It was located next to the Fair's main entrance at the current Shea Stadium/Willets Point subway stop (next to last stop on the #7 line in Flushing

The Film, “Man’s Search for Happiness”

By Taylor Petrey

In addition to deciding what the Mormon Pavilion itself would be like, organizers also had to decide on the content of their message. The answer they came up with is a memorable theme that LDS Church members around the world recognize: “Man’s Search for Happiness.”

Church officials debated two different approaches to presenting the Church at the Fair. They could try a subtle introduction to the history of the Church and an explanation of some of its distinctive beliefs, or they could boldly proselytize and testify of the “restored gospel.” Some were skeptical about trying to proselytize, fearing that it would give the pavilion a bad reputation. But the majority felt that proselytizing at the Fair was a great opportunity to teach millions of people about the Church’s message—and so a new missionary tool, the Mormon Pavilion, was born.

In contrast to the bright lights and “worldly pleasures” of other Fair sites, Church leaders felt the Mormon Pavilion should be different and provide a spiritual experience.²⁶ They wanted to select a site theme that would compliment the theme of the World’s Fair, “Peace Through Understanding.” After much discussion Elder David Evans suggested “Man’s Pursuit of Happiness” which was adopted and modified as “Man’s Search For Happiness.”²⁷

A film based on this theme ultimately proved to be the spiritual high point for many visitors of the pavilion. But the film was almost never made. Brigham Young University Motion Picture Studio initially proposed to create a film entitled, “What is a Mormon?” While

Elder David Evans believed this to be a good idea, he leaned toward having a West Coast movie studio produce the picture. The BYU studio production team held a special fast, and the next day President David O. McKay requested that BYU produce the film.²⁸ They were charged by Elder Harold B. Lee to produce something on “The three great questions of life: where we came from, our purpose and reason for being here upon the earth, and what happens to us after death.”²⁹

The film was completed by BYU per President McKay’s instructions and two



Mural of “Man’s Search For Happiness

theaters were built in the pavilion to accommodate large audiences. One missionary reported: “There usually wasn’t a dry eye in the audience.” For many years after the Fair, the film “Man’s Search For Happiness” was used by missionaries all over the world as an important teaching tool. Even today, missionaries meet people who have seen this film and remember its message.

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Meadows/Corona park). Consequently, the Mormon Pavilion, as it became known, was among the first things



Artist rendition of the Mormon Pavilion

visitors saw upon entering. The pavilion could also be seen from nearly every area of the Fair and from the highways surrounding the Fair grounds. Except for the Unisphere, the symbol of the World's Fair (which still stands today in Flushing Meadows/

Corona park), the Mormon Pavilion was the tallest structure at the Fair, standing twelve stories, or 127 feet tall.⁶ Some organizers wanted the Mormon pavilion to be a replica of the Salt Lake Tabernacle, or a replica of the Tabernacle organ. Elder David Evans, one of the planners for the pavilion

recalled, "Many other suggestions were made. We all agreed it should be something which was readily recognizable—not just a unique architectural shape." All of the proposals were rejected, until

Elder Evans himself suggested that the pavilion be a replica of the east side of the Salt Lake Temple. He said his idea was inspired by childhood memories of walking down a hill in Salt Lake City, just above the east side of the temple. Evans' proposal was accepted.

Contract workers in the area built the Mormon Pavilion, and Church members and missionaries were responsible for its decoration. Together, they made the pavilion one of the most beautiful spots of the World's Fair. There were post cards which featured the pavilion and the gardens—and an estimated 1,075,000 photos were taken.⁸ In front of the replica of the Salt Lake Temple stood a reflecting pool in which thousands of begonias floated. These flowers were arranged by a Church member named Bradley MacDonald from Santa Cruz, California, who spearheaded a giant project to pick, pack, and arrange free shipping for 40,000 begonias worth about \$68,000.⁹

Among the most important of the statues was the Church's newly acquired "Christus," by the Italian sculptor Aldo Rebecchi, carved from carrara marble, and a reproduction of the original carved by the famous Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen. Prior to the statue's acquisition, the Church owned no physical depiction of Christ.

The Singing Mothers: LDS Women at the Fair

By Taylor Petrey

The World's Fair and the Mormon Pavilion were sites for LDS performances, including The Mormon Tabernacle Choir which performed at the Fair for "Utah Day." The Choir performed in the Texas Music Hall and attracted the largest crowds of any event held there in the Fair's first season.³⁰

But many Church members felt the most memorable musical performances were by The Singing Mothers, a group of 300 amateur singers from Church Relief Societies in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, and Virginia.

The Church's *Relief Society Magazine* reported: "[The] Singing Mothers have won signal recognition in many parts of the Church...It is hoped that Relief Society sisters everywhere will converge on the New York World's Fair June 24 or

25 to enjoy the Singing Mothers concerts."³¹ The Singing Mothers were seen as a mark of women's progress and participation in the Church. As it turned out, the group's expectations were exceeded. On June 24 and 25, 1964, the Singing Mothers gave several performances opposite the Mormon Pavilion to an estimated twelve thousand people who gave the group a standing ovation.³² Richard Marshall explained, "It was generally conceded to be one the most appreciated musical events of the World's Fair."³³

Elder Brockbank, Managing Director of Mormon Pavilion

By Kent Larsen

Elder Bernard P. Brockbank, emeritus General Authority since 1980, died Wednesday, October 11th at his home in Holladay, Utah, ending 38 years as a General Authority of the LDS Church. He was most valuable to the LDS Church in New York for his management of the New York World's Fair Pavillion in 1964-1965.

An Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, Elder Brockbank served as Managing Director of a succession of Mormon fair pavilions, starting with the New York World's Fair. That pavilion saw more than 6 million visitors, three times the number of LDS Church members at the time. It set the pattern for a succession of pavilions, all managed by

Elder Brockbank, including the 1968 Hemisphere in San Antonio, Texas, the 1974 "Man and His World" in Montreal, Canada, and the Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan. Many of the elements from those pavilions were included in LDS visitors centers and missionary exhibits for years later.

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Pavilion Art and Displays

Inside the pavilion, the Church pioneered new uses of art and technology in promoting its image. Church officials commissioned and purchased new



Mural of Christ Ordaining the Apostles

statues, dioramas, and displays for the pavilion's 15,000 square feet of exhibition space. Most of the artwork was original and displayed for the first time.

Among the most important of the statues was the Church's newly acquired "Christus," by the Italian sculptor Aldo Rebecchi, carved from carrara marble, and a reproduction of the original carved by

the famous Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen. Prior to the statue's acquisition, the Church owned no physical depiction of Christ, perhaps because decision-makers shied away from the associations with icons in mainstream Catholic worship.

The Christus statue was a "major hit," according to Darol Wintle, a missionary at the World's Fair.¹⁰ Wintle reports that many visitors contrasted the image of the living resurrected Christ with that of the suffering Christ they had seen in the Vatican Pavilion. (Catholic Church leaders flew in Michelangelo's famous

statue, the "Pieta," which shows Mary holding a dead Jesus in her arms.)

At the Mormon Pavilion, visitors first saw the Christus statue as they were led into the building. Groups of fifty were led from station to station where a missionary stood and introduced the display with an explanation of the Church's beliefs, followed by personal testimony. Reports indicate that seeing the Christus at the beginning helped convey the message that Mormons are Christians. Since its debut at the World's Fair, the Christus has become an unofficial icon for the Church, featured in many pamphlets and media productions. The actual statue displayed at the World's Fair now stands in the Los Angeles Temple Visitor's Center. The Christus in the Salt Lake City Temple Square Visitor's Center is another reproduction.

Two other sculptures were created specifically for the pavilion. One, done by Avard Fairbanks, a sculptor and professor of art at the University of Utah, depicted the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The other, carved by Elaine Brockbank Evans, the sister of Pavilion Manager Elder Brockbank, was of Adam and Eve. Other

displays included a mannequin of Joseph Smith which looked so awkward that Irene Staples, a senior missionary, sawed off the head and readjusted it to make it less frightening. She also reports that pavilion workmen would often take the Book of Mormon out of the hand of the mannequin and replace it with a cigarette.¹¹ Eventually the mannequin was replaced all together with a



Sacred Grove Diorama

marble statue of Joseph Smith imported from Salt Lake City.

Stanley McAllister

By Kent Larsen

Stanley G. McAllister, a pillar of the Church in New York City, was the son of a Scottish immigrant and a grandson of Karl G. Maeser. Educated at LDS High School, he first came to New York as an missionary in 1920, serving for a time as mission secretary to B. H. Roberts, then president of the Eastern States Mission.

Completing his mission in 1923, McAllister attended the University of Utah, Georgetown University, and, after marrying Donnette Kesler in 1926, New York University. He started his career working for the real estate firm Cushman and Wakefield while attending school. In 1929 he was hired as Director of Buildings and Plant Operations for CBS, where he worked until 1946.

While working for CBS, McAllister began his church service, accepting a call as the first branch president of the Westchester branch. He also helped the Mormon Tabernacle Choir obtain a slot for what became the weekly "Music and the Spoken Word" broadcast.

Choir officials were not happy with the arrangements for the Choir on NBC, which had hosted the broadcast since it started in 1929. NBC was inconsistent with its assignment of time slots, and CBS promised a more consistent time slot, leading Church-owned KSL to switch from NBC to CBS, where it remained until recently. McAllister also helped arranged the Church's participation in CBS' "Church of the Air" program, which aired before each General Conference from 1936 to 1964.

In 1946, McAllister left CBS after an internal struggle about what direction his career should take. He accepted a position as Vice President and General Manager of Lord and Taylor, the well-known department store, remaining in that position until 1959, when he joined its parent company, Associated Dry Goods as Vice President of Properties and Operations Research.

After his wife Donette, with whom he had three children, died on March 18,

1949, McAllister married again, to Adelaide Neilson Vernon, who brought to the marriage her two children from an earlier marriage. In 1950 McAllister accepted a call to the New York Stake Presidency under then President George Mortimer. When the New York Stake was divided, and Mortimer became President of the New Jersey Stake, McAllister was called as Stake President.

Learning that the city would soon host a two-year World's Fair, McAllister pushed for a Mormon Pavillion, and used his connections to see that the Church got a good location on the fair grounds.

McAllister's work at Associated Dry Goods included the planning, design and construction of 34 stores, and the improvement and enlarging of another 16. He was also active in a number of New York and Utah-related civic organizations, including the This is the Place Monument Commission and the LDS Church's Bonneville International Corporation.

McAllister helped arrange the Utah Symphony's first concert in Carnegie Hall in 1966, served on the Board of Education in Scarsdale, New York, and helped arrange for some some 8,000 items from the estate of Mahonri M. Young to be donated to BYU.

McAllister died of a heart attack on June 20, 1970, the day after he began to arrange for his retirement. He had planned to moved to Salt Lake City. Funerals were held in both Salt Lake City and in New York City. In Salt Lake, the entire First Presidency of the Church attended, along with many of the Quorum of the Twelve.

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Other dioramas, sculptures, and murals, including Harry Anderson's "Christ Ordains the Twelve Apostles," depicted the life of Christ, Christ's visit to the Americas, Joseph Smith's First Vision, and scenes from the history of the Church. David Evans began as early as 1962 to find both member and non-member artists to create the artwork.



Christ and his Apostles Diorama

The scenes from the life of Christ and the history of the Church were done in two giant murals, 110 by 8 feet. These were seen by visitors after the Christus, and before entering the "Restoration Room." There, the First Vision diorama was explained as well as a dual diorama of Christ preaching the Sermon on the Mount and Christ teaching his "other sheep" of the Book of Mormon. The statues of Joseph Smith and the Restoration of the Priesthood stood in this room.

facilities. Even pieces of the actual pavilion were reused but stayed relatively local: they became the exterior walls of the Plainview chapel in Plainview, New York.

Missionary Life

On January 29, 1964, an all-mission conference was held in the Manhattan Ward chapel on 81st street. Elder Harold B. Lee, speaking of the Fair, predicted "That the missionaries would soon become part of the greatest missionary effort the Church had ever yet undertaken."¹² Thereafter, it was common in the Church to refer to the Mormon Pavilion as the "Greatest missionary."

The pavilion was staffed by full-time missionaries: Elders, Sisters, and couples. They wore patches on their jackets or blouses, which had a picture of the Mormon Pavilion and the Unisphere. The missionaries gave tours of the pavilion in three daily shifts (the rest of their time was spent following up on

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In the same room, visitors saw a 20-foot mural featuring scenes from the video, "Man's Search For Happiness" (see side story on page 3).

After the Fair, all the paintings, dioramas, and sculptures were sent to other Church

referrals or tracting). At each station, the missionaries followed a script, but even having recited the message hundreds of times, Darol Wintle, a missionary at the Fair, recalls that it often brought tears to his eyes.¹³ Wintle reports that many of

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the spiritual promptings in the pavilion “Changed people as they walked through—some were totally converted.”¹⁴ The missionaries always gave personal testimony of their beliefs at the conclusion of each presentation.

One problem that the missionaries sometimes faced was birds flying inside the pavilion. On more than one occasion during a discussion of the Holy Ghost, a pigeon would descend nearby.¹⁵ The official tour did not provide time for questions, but many visitors were curious about particular issues. Certainly one of the sensitive issues in America in 1964 was civil rights. The missionaries were often questioned about the position of African-Americans who could not hold the Church’s priesthood at the time.



Mormon Pavilion Brochure

In other ways, the lack of diversity posed a challenge for the Church. During the entire first season, no tours were offered in a language other than English. There were a few missionaries who happened to speak French and German, but the language in highest demand was Spanish. It was not until the second season of the fair in 1965 that twelve Spanish-speaking missionaries could help – they were the first to arrive in New York City.

Several apartments to house the missionaries were leased in Lefrak City, about one mile from the Fair. Each apartment held up to eight missionaries. Previous to the Fair, missionary work was limited in New York City because missionaries couldn’t get into buildings to tract. But during and after the Fair, thousands of

people invited missionaries into their homes.

Registration cards, an innovation of the Mormon Pavilion, were the key to these referrals. At first, there was just one station for people to sign up for a visit from the missionaries, but it proved insufficient and another was added, then a third, and finally a total of seventeen registration tables were used. The demand in the New York area was so great that one gentleman commented, “I have signed registers, filled out request cards, and asked for the missionaries. Yet no one has contacted me. What do I have to do to learn more about this Church?”¹⁶ The same registration cards developed for the World’s Fair were used throughout the Church for several years afterward.

At the closing of the Fair, President David O. McKay called the Mormon Pavilion, “One of the most unique and effective missionary efforts in [the Church’s] history.”¹⁷

Record Attendance

From the very beginning, attendance numbers shocked the Mormon Pavilion organizers.¹⁸ By the end of the second season, nearly six million people had



Mormon Pavilion Patch

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visited the Mormon Pavilion—among the top ten percent of the most visited sites at the Fair. At a time when Church membership globally was around two million, the

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number of people who were exposed to the LDS Church was remarkable.

Equally impressive was the number of visitors who requested more information about the Church or purchased The Book

The Mormon Pavilion was a major landmark in the Church's transformation from a provincial organization to a worldwide church. Participation in the Fair helped the Church to establish a stronger presence on the East Coast and

By the end of the second season, nearly six million people had visited the Mormon Pavilion—among the top ten percent of the most visited sites at the Fair. At a time when Church membership globally was around two million, the number of people who were exposed to the LDS Church was remarkable.

of Mormon. Nearly 700,000 referrals were given and nearly 90,000 Books of Mormon sold at \$.50 each.¹⁹ On the last day alone, 1,556 Books of Mormon were sold. As the visitors were from all over the World, Irene Staples, a senior missionary at the time, believes that the pavilion's "true accomplishments will never be known."²⁰

Even locally it is difficult to determine how many conversions resulted from the Fair. Mission statistics record twenty-seven baptisms in April 1964, the month the Fair opened.²¹ By October 1965, there were 910 baptisms for the year, an average of 91 per month, so the average monthly baptisms tripled during the time the Fair was open.²² Statistics are not available for the years before and after the Fair, but Elder David Evans estimates that for several years following the closing there continued to be six to eight hundred baptisms per year.²³ Elder Tom Perry, then a member of the New York Stake, estimates that 75% of the Rego Park branch in Queens were converts from the World's Fair.²⁴

provided important public relations lessons. As one LDS writer reports: "the Church's innovative involvement in the New York World's Fair was undoubtedly one of the most significant events for Latter-day Saints in the New York City area in the twentieth century. The Mormon Pavilion's influence, however, reached far beyond the borders of New York, and its legacy will continue to be realized into the twenty-first century."²⁵



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*Souvenir World's
Fair Book of Mormon*

Notes

1. David Evans letter dated Oct 16, 1975, Irene Staples, "The Mormon Pavilion at the New York World's Fair, 1964-5," v. 1, sec. "Executive Committee," Dec. 13, 1976, Salt Lake City. This is an unpublished history located in the LDS Historical Department archives. It is a three-volume work with no pagination. Hereafter cited as "Mormon Pavilion."
2. Kenneth Beesley letter; Staples, "Mormon Pavilion," v.1, sec. 'Executive Committee.'
3. Brent L. Top, "Legacy of the Mormon Pavilion," *Ensign*, Oct, 1989, p 24.
4. Evans letter; Staples, "Mormon Pavilion."
5. *Salt Lake Tribune*, Jan 30, 1966, p 1. The gardens contained fifty-four Lombardy Poplar trees, four hundred shrubs, and thousands of flowers. It featured tulips, hyacinths, geraniums, and chrysanthemums, depending on the season.
6. Bernard P. Brockbank, "The Church at the New York World's Fair", *Improvement Era*, April, 1964, p 281.
7. Evans letter; Staples, "Mormon Pavilion."
8. "The Easterner" November, 1965. [Eastern States Mission Newsletter]
9. Staples, "Mormon Pavilion," v. 1, Begonia Project
10. Darol Wintle, interview with the author, December 29, 1999.
11. Staples, "Mormon Pavilion," v. 1, sec. "Murals and Dioramas."
12. Wilburn C. West, "Missionary Service at the Mormon Pavilion," Staples, v. 2, "Missionary Guide Program."
13. Darol Wintle, interview with the author, December 29, 1999.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Staples, "Mormon Pavilion," v.1 sec. "Guest Registers."
17. Quoted in Evans letter; Staples, "Mormon Pavilion."
18. "The Church Moves On," *Improvement Era*, July 64, p 608.
19. Records were not kept of referrals or Books of Mormon in April the first year and the first two weeks of April the second year.
20. Staples, "Mormon Pavilion," v. 1, "Statistics"
21. "The Easterner," April 1964. "The Easterner" was the mission newsletter in the Eastern States Mission. At the end of 1964, the mission had 810 baptisms.
22. "The Easterner," November 1965.
23. Evans letter; Staples, "Mormon Pavilion."
24. As quoted in Top, p 28.
25. Top, p 28.
26. Don LeFevre, "A Tall Missionary," *The Instructor*, April, 1964, p 134.
27. Beesley letter; Staples, "Mormon Pavilion."
28. Top, p 26. cf. Wetzel O. Whitaker, *Pioneering With Film: A History of Church and Brigham Young University Films* (Provo, Utah: n.p., 1982), pp. 57-58.
29. As quoted in Top, p 26.
30. Richard Marshall, "Mormon Pavilion at the New York World's Fair...A Progress Report," *Improvement Era*, April 65, p 296.
31. "Relief Society Time at the New York World's Fair," *Relief Society Magazine*, v. 51 n. 4.
32. "The Church Moves On," *Improvement Era*, July 64, p 712.
33. Marshall, "A Progress Report," p 296.

Modern History

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Her wall painting also inaugurates the museum's new Ramp and Wedge series, which takes advantage of wall space on a ramp connecting the museum's first and second floors. The exhibit space covers 80 square feet of wall space, stretching at its tallest the full height of the museum's two-story entrance.

Atkisson, a resident of New York City, has an MFA from New York's prestigious School of Visual Arts. Her work has appeared in exhibits at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, Artists Space of New York, and d.u.m.b.o. Arts Center in Brooklyn, New York. Her art has been heavily influenced by her interest in family history, creating unique images that have attracted the attention of critics.

Concert of Composer Boren and Librettist Nelson's Work

New orchestral and vocal works by former New York resident Murray Boren and current New York Librettist Glen Nelson were featured Saturday, November 11 at the Temple Square Assembly Hall, as part of its recital series of LDS music and musicians. Composer-in-residence at Brigham Young University, Murray Boren, has composed an evening of new religious music to texts by author Glen Nelson, to be performed by soprano Susan Alexander Boren.

Modern History

Recent Events in New York City that will be history

Growing New York Stake Needs Expensive Real Estate

This past June, the New York Times looked at the effect of real estate prices on churches in New York, interviewing the Church's real estate representative for the Northeastern US, Richard Hedberg, and New York Stake President Brent Belnap.

God's Army Opens in New York to Mixed Reviews

Richard Dutcher's movie about LDS missionaries in Los Angeles opened in New York on August 24th for a short, two-week engagement at a theater owned by Madison Square Garden, courtesy of Garden CEO and LDS Church member Dave Checketts. New York newspapers panned the show, while Dutcher got an appreciative interview on the local NPR station, WNYC.

The New York Times criticized the movie for "preaching to the converted" but praised the film for its "unusual subject and unpretentious performances." While the New York Post was completely opposite in its review, calling it an "intelligent movie" that "admirably doesn't quite end up preaching to the converted," but criticizes it for "too many bland performances, clumsily staged scenes and laggard pacing that drags out the proceedings for nearly two hours."

White Plains Temple Loses Zoning Decision

The LDS Church's plans to construct a Temple in Harrison, New York, just north of New York City, were dealt a setback September 28th when the Harrison Zoning Board of Appeals rejected the Church's request for a height variance. The requested variance would have allowed the Church to construct a 44-foot high building in an area zoned for residences no taller than 30 feet. The 5-2 decision caps a four-year-long debate with the community and the town's planning and zoning boards, which said the proposed Temple simply didn't fit the neighborhood. "The majority of the zoning board found that the building was out of character with the neighborhood," said the zoning board's chairman, Richard Rafail.

New York Stake Marches in NYC's Columbus Day Parade

For the third year in a row members of the New York New York Stake, along with missionaries serving there, marched in New York City's Columbus Day Parade. This year the stake earned the 20th spot and appeared in the television coverage of the parade.

More than 100 church members and missionaries carried flags representing 100 nations, as well as a banner announcing the parade entry, up Fifth Avenue from 44th street to 59th street and then west along 59th street to Columbus Circle, a distance of more than a mile. The parade started at noon on

Monday, October 9th, and the New York Stake entry, in 20th place, started marching at about 12:20 pm. By 1:45 they had marched the length of the route. In 20th place, the New York Stake was only eight or nine spots behind New York Senatorial Candidate Hillary Clinton, which may have helped get the Church television exposure.

While the number of participants from the stake (as well as the stake's position in the parade) has increased each year, the marchers still did not carry all the 150 national flags available. According to Jamie Fairbairn of the New York New York Stake Public Affairs Committee, the stake plans to march again next year, and hopes to eventually carry all the flags. "We hope to get regional participation next year," said Fairbairn.

Thousands Attend New York Regional Conference

Thousands of LDS Church members packed 15 local stake centers and chapels to hear President James E. Faust of the Church's First Presidency speak via satellite from the Plainview New York Stake Center on Sunday, October 22nd. The New York Regional Conference included 9 stakes and districts covering New York City, Long Island and lower New York state, as well as the New York New York North and the New York New York South missions. In his remarks, President Faust said several recent regional conferences had been broadcast in this manner, with video feeds of speakers at one LDS facility being broadcast to others.

Speaking at the conference in addition to Elder Faust, were Elder W. Craig Zwick, President of the North America Northeast Area, and his wife; Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve and his wife and Sister Ruth Faust. Elder Zwick, who was conducting, spoke first.

Both Elder Faust and Elder Eyring spoke at length at a Regional Priesthood Meeting hosted at the New York New York Stake Center the day before.

New York Missionaries Talk Baseball

Two LDS missionaries told the New York Times in an October 26th article about a challenge many missionaries face — trying to make contacts during a major sporting event. The missionaries tried to make the best of the difficulty, however, talking about baseball when making street contacts.

"We get a lot of people telling us, 'Go away. We're watching the game,'" said one of the missionaries, Elder Tyler McKell, from Valencia, California. While Elder McKell and his companion, Elder Barrett Bonella of Salt Lake City, didn't have a solution for what to do during the games, they were able to use the World Series to their advantage. McKell and Bonella talk baseball in their street contacting. While street-contacting, also known as "fearless" because of the courage it takes to talk to

people cold, Elders McKell and Bonella's introduction takes advantage of the fact that New Yorkers have their loyalties split between the Yankees and Mets in what is known here as a "Subway Series." Their approach goes like this:

"Buenos dias, senora, Do you like the Yankees or the Mets?" The surprise of having missionaries ask about baseball is often all they need to get a conversation going, one they can eventually turn to religion.

New York Stake Hosts Grant Johannesen Concert

Nationally known LDS pianist Grant Johannesen wrapped up a busy day at the New York New York stake center performing a concert of both well-known works and works by two LDS composers. The concert followed a regional Family History Seminar that attracts hundreds of genealogists and LDS Church members from the region each year.

Johannesen's career spans more than fifty years, in which he has distinguished himself as an international pianist of the highest order. He is a long-time resident of New York City, when not on tour, and has supported the Church here, most notably through a concert series that raised funds to build the New York New York Stake Center. His concert featured the works of LDS composers Arthur Shepherd and Helen Taylor in addition to works by Mozart, Schumann and Debussy. Helen Taylor was Johannesen's wife until her death in 1950.

Family History Seminar held at New York Stake Center

The New York New York Stake hosted a regional Family History Seminar attracting hundreds of genealogists and LDS Church members from the region on Saturday, October 21st. The seminar started with a keynote address by Cathy Horn of the Jewish Genealogical Society and included five hours of workshops on either side of a luncheon with live music and featuring genealogy displays.

Workshops at the Seminar helped participants sharpen their skills and teach new skills in areas such as preserving photos on CD, getting family stories recorded, tracking and retrieving information from other countries. One workshop featured LDS artist Valerie Atkisson, who has a new exhibit at the Queens Museum of Art. Her art in the exhibit tells the story of her family in Norway for more than 200 years.

LDS Artist Turns Family History Into Art Exhibit

LDS Artist Valerie Atkisson has taken her family history to a new level, integrating it with her artwork in a way that is garnering praise and attracting attention to her work. Atkisson's latest work, entitled "Family in Norway" opened Tuesday evening at the Queens Museum of Art in New York City.

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