

1983

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Recommended Citation

LeBlanc, Robert (1983) "World's Fairs: Technical and Cultural," *Visions in Leisure and Business*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 4 , Article 16.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/visions/vol1/iss4/16>

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WORLD'S FAIRS--TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL

BY

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1984 WORLD'S FAIR
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ABSTRACT

This article examines the new Louisiana World Exposition and reviews the progress being made toward its development. The emphasis is upon the processes utilized for its successful operations.

WORLD'S FAIR--TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL

INTRODUCTION

This is not just the World's Fair, it is the Louisiana World Exposition which is a different entity. The Louisiana World Exposition, Inc. (LWE) is the private, non-profit sector which is hosting the World's Fair. It is responsible for funding, managing, concessions and so forth and is based in New Orleans in the strongest community of the State of Louisiana. I serve on the Executive Committee of LWE but my salaried position is an appointed position by the Governor, which is Executive Director of the Louisiana Exposition Authority. I am dragging you through this dissertation because I am not the head man responsible for the Fair because, if I were, we would have six of these presentations.

I would also like to introduce you to Jibby Fox, the Secretary of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism. I have the pleasure of having another one of the Exposition Authority members aboard, Butch Tabor. Butch is a professional in the travel industry and head of the Lake Charles Tourist and Convention Commission.

I have had a reputation of being independent most of my life and I really have a lot of picking to do with critics. I have had the privilege of going to several New York shows and I personally highly resent some critic telling me what I like and do not like. I have seen some great shows that have died in three months. So how can a person be so presumptuous to tell me what I like and don't like?

The reason I am mentioning this is I have followed the Knoxville World's Fair since its inception and I think Knoxville, Tennessee has all the reason in the world to be proud. They did a tremendous job. They

really pulled off a coup. Shout that from the highest tower around the world. It is indicative just to see the twenty-three nations that participated. They probably had to spend at least twenty-five minutes of an interview to sell the nations on exhibiting to say what Knoxville had to offer. They have an identity problem just like Spokane did. I was in the Fair twice before it was open and four times since it has opened, and I will be going back next Sunday and if you haven't gone, there are a few days left and I feel you ought to go. It is fantastic and it shows what a community can do. I can not do anything but applaud their effort.

I think they received much bad press. The national press, whether it is the electronic media or whatever, can make you or break you and you have no control over it. We know that we have our marketing and our mission cut out to stroke, to nourish, to pet and to appease the press. That is going to be a very critical play. I think we have a better advantage than Knoxville because of New Orleans having an international reputation, so hopefully we will not have the problem with the press.

DEVELOPMENT

In fact, we had an eighteen-month head start on Knoxville in involvement with the World's Fair. Like Knoxville, which is considered southern, Louisiana is even more southern, and therefore slower, I guess, so that is probably why we had to get an eighteen-month head start. We were fighting for 1982 dates but because of the provincialism of Louisiana, we just could not get our act together.

In retrospect, it really served a tremendous purpose for us because it is not very often that you can have an international event of that scope and have an almost living laboratory two years in advance. So we have monitored and felt the pulse and worked with the people at Knoxville who have been totally open.

It is a phenomenon in my opinion that there is such "esprit-de-corps" there. Before we went to visit the people in Seattle who put their Fair together in 1974, we called them and told them we were working on having a World's Fair. These people opened their books and their hearts to us, and the same thing was true in Spokane. In Knoxville, while they were having the fair and as busy as they were, they always gave us top attention and treatment. We are very proud of that. It was tremendous and in retrospect, it is to our benefit that our fair will be held in 1984.

The exciting element is, it's a real challenge and curiously enough, it is not the first fair we have hosted in Louisiana. There are about seven cities that have hosted worlds fairs and there are only two cities, New York and New Orleans, who have hosted expositions twice in the United States. In 1884, we hosted the International Cotton Exposition which commemorated the first shipment of cotton from the New World to the Old World. It was exciting, it was on the river, and it was very, very successful. We are going to have the nostalgia part of this fair commemorating that 1884 World's Fair.

We are proud of the fact that in international competition, we are the first state to ever carry the name of a world's fair. Whether it be the state of Belgium, the state of France or the state of West Germany,

the fairs were always hosted by cities--the Brussels World's Fair, the Paris World's Fair, the Montreal World's Fair, etc. We are very happy that this is a Louisiana World's Fair which will set one of many precedents. We are also probably the first city to host a world's fair whereas even before a fair was conceived, we already have four international plazas existing within three or four blocks of the entrance to the fair. We have the Spanish Plaza, the British Plaza, the Joan of Arc Plaza, and the Italian Plaza, which will be the VIP staging area.

In addition, because New Orleans is the largest port in the nation, we are probably the first fair to be able to accommodate ocean-going vessels. That is an exciting concept. We have already contracted with the tall ships which most of you will remember because of the excitement they created in the harbor of New York during the bicentennial year of '76 and we are very proud of that.

We have a very exciting theme concept and one that was very carefully thought out. The theme is "The World of Rivers--Fresh Water as a Source of Life." With the Mississippi being a backdrop to the fair and the added commercial aspect of New Orleans being the busiest port in the United States, that, in itself, is an added attraction and a sight to behold.

There will be 4,000 linear feet of river space and all of the international pavilions will be overlooking the mighty Mississippi River. The "Rivers of the World" was chosen as the theme because it was felt that every exposition in modern history has been so highly technicalized, as is evidenced by Knoxville as well as Seattle on space, and Spokane with man's environment that we felt we wanted to back out of this deluge of technology. We wanted you to explore the culture and ambiance of life and the history we can relate to so well in Louisiana. We are going to ask each nation and corporation to show its relationship to water--how it contributes to civilization.

Most every great city in every nation and civilization were founded on the banks of the rivers throughout the world. I guess you can say that the rivers of yesterday are the interstates of today. It was the only method of transportation and communication and so there is much that even the Third World nations can relate to. It does not risk embarrassing you to come with such high technology. It does not risk your embarrassment when you can not come up with an atomic desalinization plant for changing salt water into fresh water. Like Peru at Knoxville, they have shown culture because they are proud of their heritage and ancestry. We want to feature that. It is a great part of the lifestyle of Louisiana.

SUMMARY

I could have orchestrated the subtitle "Fresh Water as a Source of Life." I know most of you have seen the commercial put on by Phillips 66, an energy-producing company. That commercial shows the recycling of water for industrial purposes and brings it back to the purity of a running brook. In that commercial, they state "we are developing alternate sources of energy, but there will never be an alternate source of water." Think of the importance of that and let me underscore it. In our own country that has everything to offer, there are at least seven

states today fighting over the rights to the Colorado River. By the year 2000, fresh water may be as scarce a commodity as oil today.

We are excited about what we have to offer and how people will relate to us. I was surprised today not to hear anyone mention educational aspects of the World's Fair. It has always been an education and so creative. It is where the Eiffel Tower, electricity, telephones, television, the ice cream parlor and the hot dog were all introduced. It is an educational experience for all the people in Louisiana and the surrounding areas who could not go to Knoxville or Seattle. It is something we hope they will capitalize on.

The sight will be in downtown New Orleans on about 82 acres. We are spending about \$350,000,000 and it will run for six months. The dates are May 12 through November 11, 1984. We are expecting anywhere from 12 to 15 million people. So much depends on the international economic situation. Look what happened to Mexico, a nation that almost went bankrupt. These things are important to hash over. We are looking at maybe 1.2 to 1.5 million foreign visitors and hope that you and your families will be among the millions of Americans to visit us in 1984.
