

# Queens Museum Preparing Exhibition on World's Fair

By FRED FERRETTI

Plasterers were spackling new dry walls, painters were painting and cleaners were vacuuming the Queens Museum's 22,000 square feet of new gallery space to prepare for its opening next June when one of the building engineers made a discovery.

"It was in the attic rafters underneath an air-conditioning duct," said Helen Harrison, the curator.

"It" was a scale model of the New York City building in Flushing Meadow Park that was constructed for the 1939-40 World's Fair. Later the building served as the temporary home of the United Nations, still later as one of the exhibition halls of the 1964-65 World's Fair and now it is the home of the museum, a giant ice-skating rink and a vast scale model of New York City ordered by Robert Moses for the second fair.

## Nostalgic Paraphernalia

The model of the building was one of the more exciting discoveries for the museum, which is putting together a nostalgic show of 1939-40 World's Fair paraphernalia for the opening exhibition of its new galleries.

Miss Harrison, who is guest curator for the exhibition, has been piling up exhibits that she said were not intended to re-create the fair, but rather to capture its essence and define "the illusive qualities that made it so memorable." These were, she said, "the role of the world exhibition at a time of social planning, at the end of the Depression, before war, when people were optimistically looking to the future even though there was much uncertainty."

A small query in a local Queens weekly, Miss Harrison said, brought a flood of catalogues, brochures, magazines, little plastic Heinz pickles and all sorts of buttons, medallions and souvenirs as well as offers of "tons more."

## 'The Good Stuff' Arrives

But then what she called "the good stuff" began to come in.

Ralph Russo of Rye, N.Y., volunteered one of the first Radio Corporation of America television sets — a vast, bulky mahogany box that contained a picture tube that viewers watched through a mirror attached to the lid of the console.

"My father bought it in White Plains in 1939," said Mr. Russo, who likes old books and furniture and has kept the set polished and working to this day.

"Just the other day the voltage tube went," he said, "but that's nothing —

put in another one and it will be as good as new."

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company and Bell Laboratories have turned up one of their 1939 Voders, affectionately called "Pedro." The machine, which synthesized human speech, animal noises and other sounds, was the star of the Bell Telephone exhibition.

## The First Electric Organ

From another donor will come a Hammond Novachord, the first electric organ. It was the center of attraction at the Ford Pavilion's garden concerts.

Herbert Starkman sent in a silver-plated Trylon and Perisphere, the symbol of the fair.

The tractor-trailers that used to take visitors between various sections of the fair have been found rusting in a pile under the Van Wyck Expressway in Queens, and several will be sandblasted and painted for the show.

Harold Surva of Elmont, L.I., sent word that he was the owner of a 1940 Crosley, the 60 miles-to-a-gallon "car of tomorrow" that was exhibited at the fair. Miss Harrison said Mr. Surva would drive it right into an exhibit space.

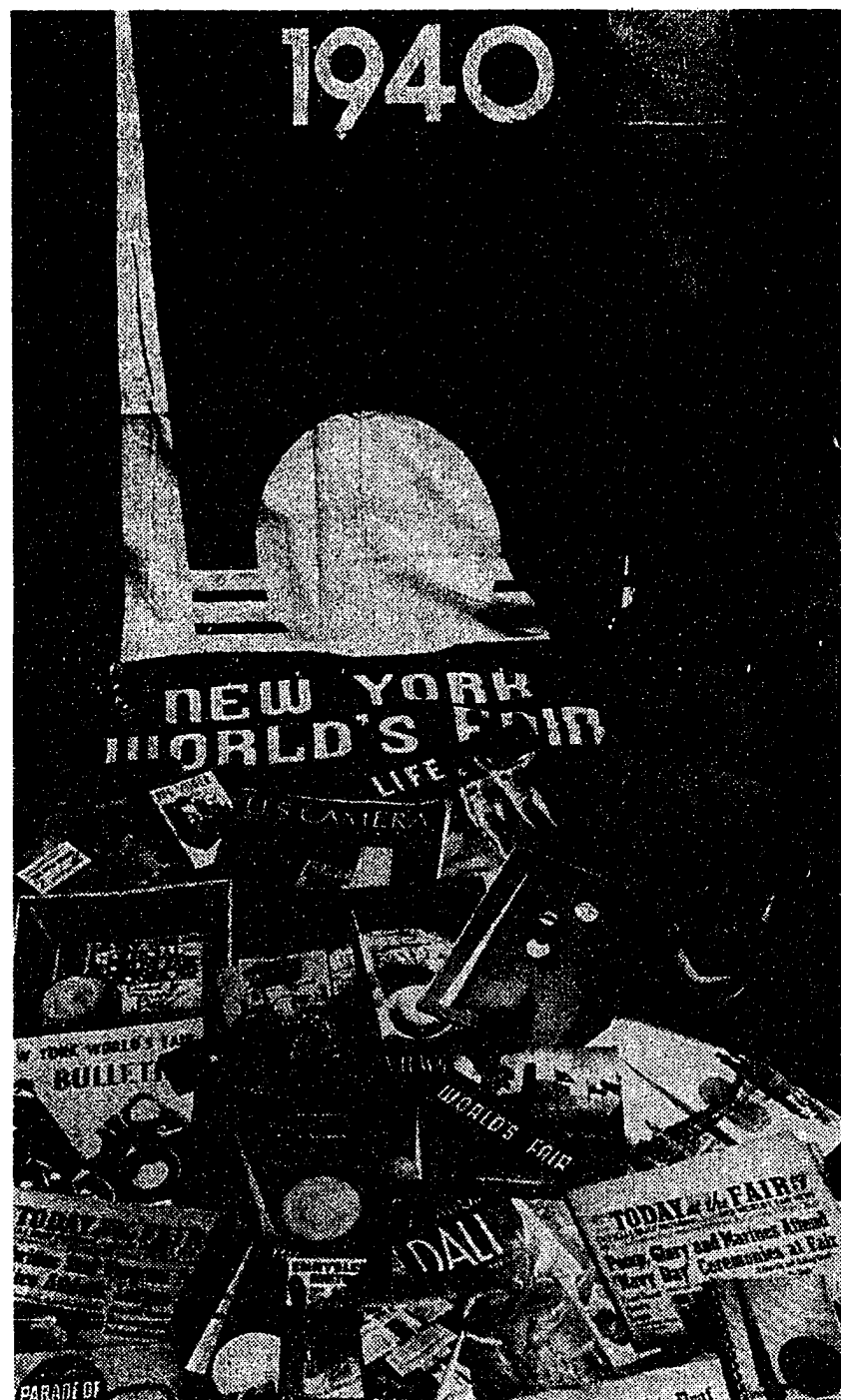
## Other Items From the Past

The National Sculpture Society will lend a film depicting all the outdoor sculpture murals at the fair. Piles of photographs of Sally Rand and her fans, Rosita Royce and her doves and Ethel Krause and her arrows will all be on exhibition.

Miss Krause came into the museum the other day with old, yellowed photos showing her as a young woman dressed as Robin Hood and shooting arrows, something she did for the two-year duration of the fair. She still shoots, she said, "but it's hard to get good arrows these days."

"The World's Fair Show" will be a celebration of the fair's 40th anniversary, and planning grants have already been received from the State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Miss Harrison is now requesting further money from the New York Council on the Humanities and from the many companies who were fair exhibitors. The exhibit will cost \$150,000, according to Miss Harrison's estimate.

Thus far the largest single piece of fair memorabilia is a huge banner in the fair's colors of orange and blue



The New York Times / Barton Silverman

## Souvenirs from the 1939-40 World's Fair on display at the Flushing Museum

reading, "1940, New York World's Fair," with the Trylon and Perisphere superimposed white on blue. It was provided by the late Frank Pokorney, a Czech-American who was one of the planners of the Czech pavilion in 1939-40 and a force in the Flushing Historical Society. Mr. Pokorney also supplied mounds of programs, sketches and plans of pavilions and landscaping, all of which will be exhibited.

Miss Harrison also hopes to re-create the eating-living spree of one World's Fair visitor who boasted that he had free coffee at the Brazilian Pavilion, pickles and beans at the Heinz Pavilion and free milk at the Borden's Pavilion, made a cross-country phone call at A.T. & T. and slept a night in the Pullman car that was on exhibition.

"If we can find him," she said, "we'd like to have him here — as an exhibit."