

NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR  
1964-1965



Unisphere® presented by  United States Steel  
© 1961 New York World's Fair 1964-1965 Corporation

REMARKS OF  
ROBERT MOSES  
PRESIDENT OF  
THE NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR  
1964-1965 CORPORATION  
ON  
BABYLON, LONG ISLAND'S  
ROBERT MOSES DAY  
AT THE FAIR  
NEW YORK STATE PAVILION  
FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 1964  
11 A.M.

COME TO THE FAIR!



*Mayor Hanse and Friends:*

Only a cold heart could fail to appreciate your presence here today, at once to see the Fair in its significance to Long Island, and incidentally to demonstrate your faith in me as an old, I might say inveterate, Babylonian.

Most of you have seen Walt Disney's animated Lincoln in the Illinois Pavilion. If not, you should make the pilgrimage there this afternoon. Lincoln knew people in their homes and what makes a village a community with local leadership and pride. One of the shrewd, homely sayings attributed to him ran something like this:

"I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live in it so that his place will be proud of him."

In this instance I can vouch for the truth of the first sentence. As to the second, a man must submit to the judgment of his peers.

At any rate, if in any small way this adage applies to me, I am doubly happy because I am a loyal Babylonian and it would appear that you think I have been an asset to our town.

For years I commuted on the Long Island Railroad, observed the Brooklyn water works and figured out a State parkway system following these water courses, and during many happy hours on the South Bay got the idea of Jones Beach, Fire Island and the causeways which make them accessible. Thus a 200-acre isolated patch of State oceanfront park, acquired by sheer accident, has become the nucleus for a great recreation system extending out east from New York, burgeoning into expressways, golf courses, estates and sportsmen's paradises.

The Long Island counties and towns and villages have been encouraged by us to provide for purely local recreation needs. Population growth has been in large part, if not wholly, anticipated, and the suburban mistakes of overcrowding have been avoided or mitigated. I only hope that the remaining privately owned open spaces still needed for parks will be seized by vigilant officials before they too disappear. In my early days as a park man, some of the local gentry sneered about Gardens of Babylon. Today the early critics are silent.

I can assure you of this at least, that while I am a working and voting New Yorker, I am a Babylonian at heart. Without our Village and the Bay, our inlets and barrier beaches I would not be alive today. A New Yorker, even if he lives as I do right on the East River and can look out over the Triborough and other bridges he has helped to establish, preserves his sanity by being at least a weekend, year-round exurbanite. I am convinced that to serve a metropolis a planner and administrator must spend his leisure where there is nothing obtrusive, only sand and open water between him and the coast of Europe.

Close to a half century ago when I first saw Babylon, the Village boasted about 3,000 souls, the town 9,000 and Suffolk County 96,000. Nassau was beginning to fill up but commuters further east were scarce. Montauk was a day's journey away, and the Fire Island light revolved in lonely grandeur, throwing its intermittent beams into my bedroom up in the old Western Union telegraph tower in little old Fire Island State Park. It is all very different now. I won't say always better, but how can we demand isolation and refuse to share our treasures with others? It is, I must admit, sometimes disconcerting to walk on Main Street like a Rip Van Winkle or to find Sam's barber shop full of new folks in sharp clothes, elbowing out the baymen and captains, swarming with a new generation of brats intent on the comics, or to find Willie and Herman mein-hosting droves of utter strangers, products of the industrial revolution and improved transportation.

Well, I've said my say, God bless you, my neighbors. Come to the Fair often and don't run yourselves ragged trying to do it all in a day. Then when it is all over we promise Flushing as good a park as you can find in Nassau and Suffolk. It has always been the dream of philosophers to bring the country into the City—what the Romans called "rus in urbe," and that's how we have progressed in reverse and by indirection on Long Island, from Suffolk to Nassau, to Queens, to Brooklyn and now over to Staten Island and New Jersey by the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, which we open in November, with Manhattan and the Bronx as residuary legatees.

Ours is a great inheritance. Paraphrasing the words of St. Paul, we are citizens of no mean metropolis.