



231: — The Jewish-Palestine Building

# PAVILIONS *of* PROMISE

***THE PRESENCE OF JEWISH-PALESTINE (ERETZ YISRAEL)  
AT WORLD'S FAIRS BEFORE ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE IN 1948***

**DAVID MATLOW** — Before there was a State of Israel, it had a presence at world's fairs. A country that did not yet exist was represented among the nations of the world. The flag of a country that was still a dream, flew proudly with other national flags.

How is this possible? It is the result of cooperation between Zionists in the host cities of the fairs and those living in *Eretz Yisrael* who together conceived of, planned and implemented Palestine pavilions at world's fairs in Paris (1931 and 1937), Brussels (1935) and New York City (1939).

Numerous academic papers have been written about these pavilions and how they served to perform the State of Israel into existence. As a collector, I propose to tell this important story through items in my collection.

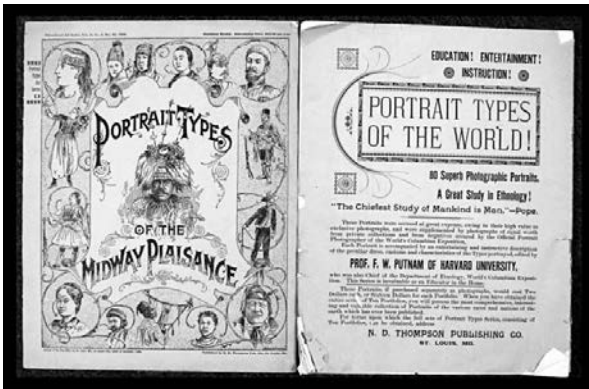


## THE COLUMBIA EXPOSITION



The Columbia Exposition was held in Chicago in 1893 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of the new world. As was customary for fairs at the time, this fair included foreign villages in which visitors could see how "exotic" people lived in faraway parts of the world.

There was no specifically Jewish village, but approximately 80% of the residents of the fair's Turkish village (Palestine was part of the Ottoman, or Turkish, empire at the time) were Jewish (in fact, the mosque in the Turkish village hosted *Yom Kippur* services for the Jewish villagers).



*Portrait Types of the Midway Plaisance* was a book of photographs of the various types of people on exhibit at the fair. Here is one example from the book:



PORTRAIT TYPE — FAR-AWAY-MOSES (JEW)

## THE ST. LOUIS EXPOSITION

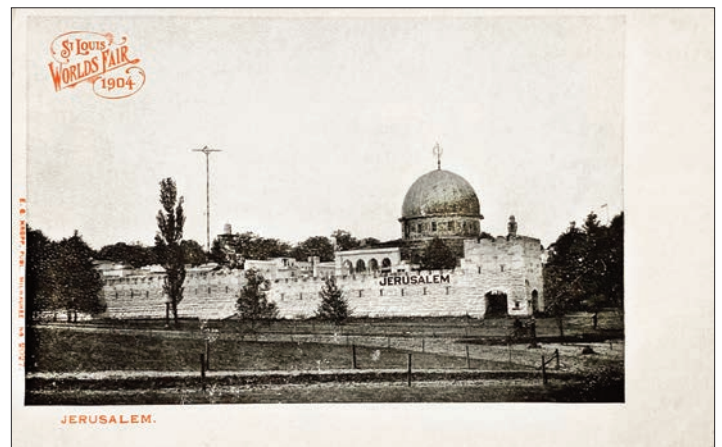


JERUSALEM WALL and ST. LOUIS FERRIS WHEEL, 1904

St. Louis hosted the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904 to celebrate the centennial of the massive land purchase from France. A group of investors financed and built a ten acre model of Jerusalem which was a featured attraction at this fair. Hundreds of residents of Jerusalem, together with camels and donkeys, lived in the model during the fair enabling fair-goers to experience a version of what it was like to walk the streets of the holy city. A ticket to enter Jerusalem was 25 cents.



ADMISSION TICKET



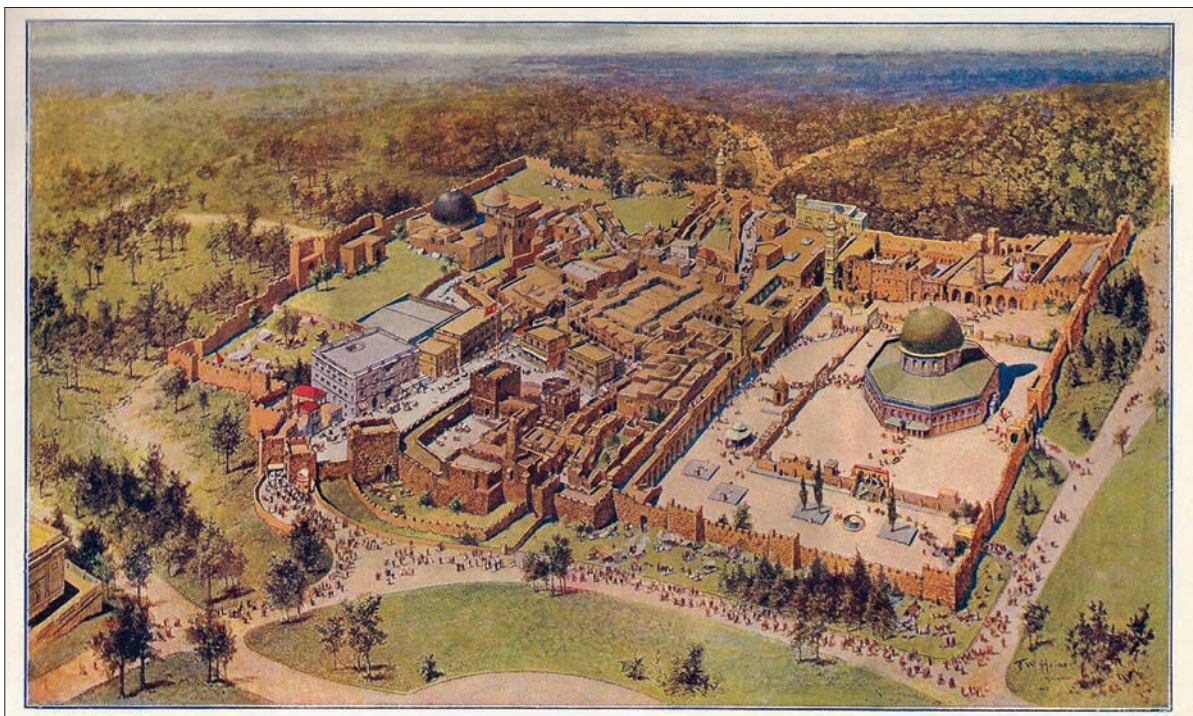
1904 POSTCARD

Recognizing the opportunity that a world's fair presents to advance the cause of Zionism to an international audience, St. Louis Zionist Michael Stifelman arranged for the Zionist flag to be flown at the Hall of Nations — *marking the first time this flag flew publicly among the other flags of the world*. This act provided the Zionist movement with both official public recognition and international legitimacy, and was captured in this stereoscopic card published by Underwood & Underwood in 1904.





STEREOSCOPIC IMAGE OF THE ZIONIST FLAG HANGING AT THE WORLD'S FAIR IN ST. LOUIS



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE JERUSALEM EXHIBIT AT THE ST. LOUIS WORLD'S FAIR



The Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904 was also known as the **St. Louis World's Fair**. Americans were already enjoying ice cream, but the ice cream cone was popularized at the fair.

CELEBRATE THE CENTURY - 1900s



The St. Louis World's Fair, also known as the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, introduced the world to the ice cream cone as celebrated in this *Celebrate the Century* stamp, issued by the USPS on February 3, 1998 and captured in this photo taken in 1904.



## TEL AVIV – LEVANT FAIRS

Starting in 1924, as a result of the efforts of a company called *Mischar ve Taasya* (Trade and Industry), trade shows featuring Palestinian (meaning the Jewish residents of the area then called Palestine) products, businesses and industries started to be held. These trade shows evolved to be sophisticated international exhibitions held in Tel Aviv, starting in 1932 as the Levant Fairs.



LEVANT FAIR MAGAZINE COVER, 1932



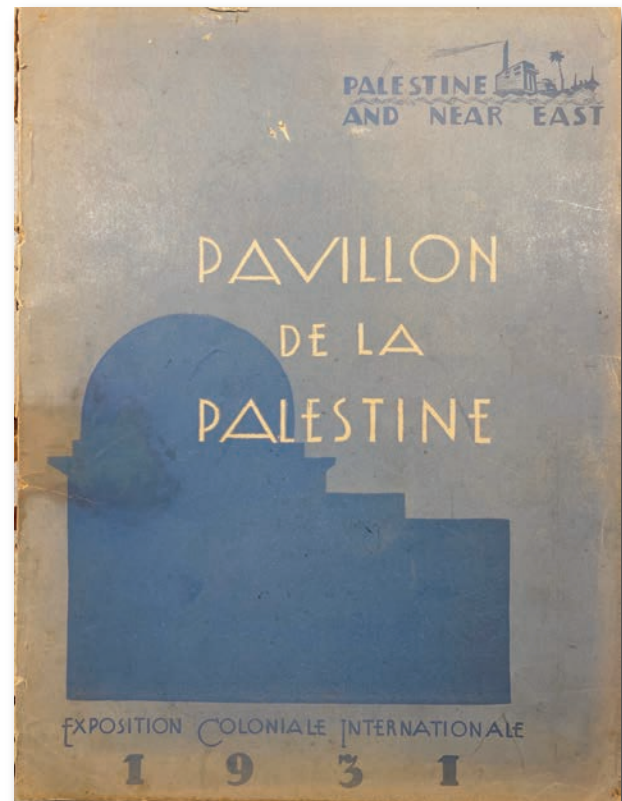
LEVANT FAIR LABELS, 1934 and 1936

It is *Mischar ve Taasya* (the exhibition arm of which was also called Levant Fair Studios) that worked with local Zionist leaders and various Zionist institutions to present the pavilions at numerous world's fairs during the 1930s.

## PARIS 1931



FRENCH STAMP FOR EXPOSITION COLONIALE INTERNATIONALE



1931 PALESTINIAN PAVILION MAGAZINE

## BRUSSELS 1935



PALESTINIAN PAVILION AT THE BRUSSELS WORLD'S FAIR



**PARIS 1937**



1937 PARIS EXPOSITION INTERNATIONAL STAMP



PARIS PAVILION 1937 BOOK OF POSTCARDS

**NEW YORK 1939**



NINE LABELS FROM A SHEET OF LABELS THAT CELEBRATE ALL OF THE PAVILIONS AT THE 1939 WORLD'S FAIR, WITH PALESTINE IN THE MIDDLE AND SEPARATELY ENLARGED



New York's Jewish-Palestine Pavilion opened ten days after the British announced its *White Paper* which severely restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine at the very time when places of refuge were desperately required for European Jewry who were on the threshold of being destroyed by the Nazis and their collaborators.

The Pavilion hoped to prove to the world that due to their tremendous achievements and progress in Palestine, the Jewish people were ready for and capable of having their own homeland. In fact, the Zionist flag flying in New York among the flags of all of the other nations with





pavilions hoped to show the world that in a sense the country already existed. It didn't, but soon would, as a result of another event that took place on the very same world's fair grounds

Numerous souvenirs of Palestine were sold at the Jewish-Palestine Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair, including the items illustrated below.



PALESTINE PAVILION GUIDE BOOK



NOTEPAD – BEZALEL ART SCHOOL, JERUSALEM



PALESTINE PAVILION PIN AND LABEL



BUBBY AND ZAIDY FIGURES (MADE IN SYRACUSE, NY)



On November 29, 1947 the United Nations passed the *Partition Resolution* which established the Jewish State.

The United Nations met in its temporary home, the former New York City Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair.

**1997 ISRAELI STAMP CELEBRATING 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PARTITION RESOLUTION**



## POSTSCRIPT / MONTREAL 1967 and DUBAI 2021

The State of Israel was represented at Expo 67 in Montreal.

The Pavilion hosted an ancient Dead Sea scroll as Israel's government used the pavilion to prove the connection of the Jewish people to this land, a fact that Israel's enemies were then disputing. The Six Day War occurred during the run of the fair, causing the Israel Pavilion to be a place of celebration which attracted 5.5 million visitors, twice as many as expected.

Kosher food was also available — for many it was their first experience with falafel!



THE AUTHOR AND HIS FAMILY AT EXPO 67 IN MONTREAL



PASSPORT STAMPS FROM THE ISRAELI PAVILION AT EXPO 67 AND A POSTCARD WITH THE ENGRAVED IMAGE OF THE KATIMIVAK PAVILION THAT APPEARED ON THE POSTAGE STAMP ISSUED BY CANADA POST



On October 1, 2021 the world's fair in Dubai opened. The fair includes an Israel Pavilion. As the Palestine Pavilions of the 1930s anticipated the promise of the future State of Israel, let's hope the Israel pavilion in Dubai is a pavilion that anticipates a different promise to come soon— the promise of peace.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Matlow has collected Israeli stamps from the time he was ten years old (thanks to Issie Baum, who he met at that age). He also owns the world's largest private collection of Theodor Herzl memorabilia.

Through his website (<https://herzlcollection.com>) and weekly column in the Canadian Jewish News (<https://thecjn.ca/arts/treasures/>), he uses his collection to inform people about the history of the Zionist movement and the State of Israel, so as to inspire them to continue to work towards the betterment of the Jewish people and our homeland.

David's collection of Zionist world's fair memorabilia is a related tangent to his main collection, all of which speaks to the longing of the Jewish people for a homeland and the tremendous efforts by many that led to its creation.

More information on this subject is available at <https://azm.org/pavilions-of-promise>