

How Mattydale Almost Got the New York State Fair

By Michael F. McGraw

Revised December 30, 2013

The Herald-American, Syracuse, NY,
Sunday, October 28, 1945

Syracuse Envisioned as State Hub in '49

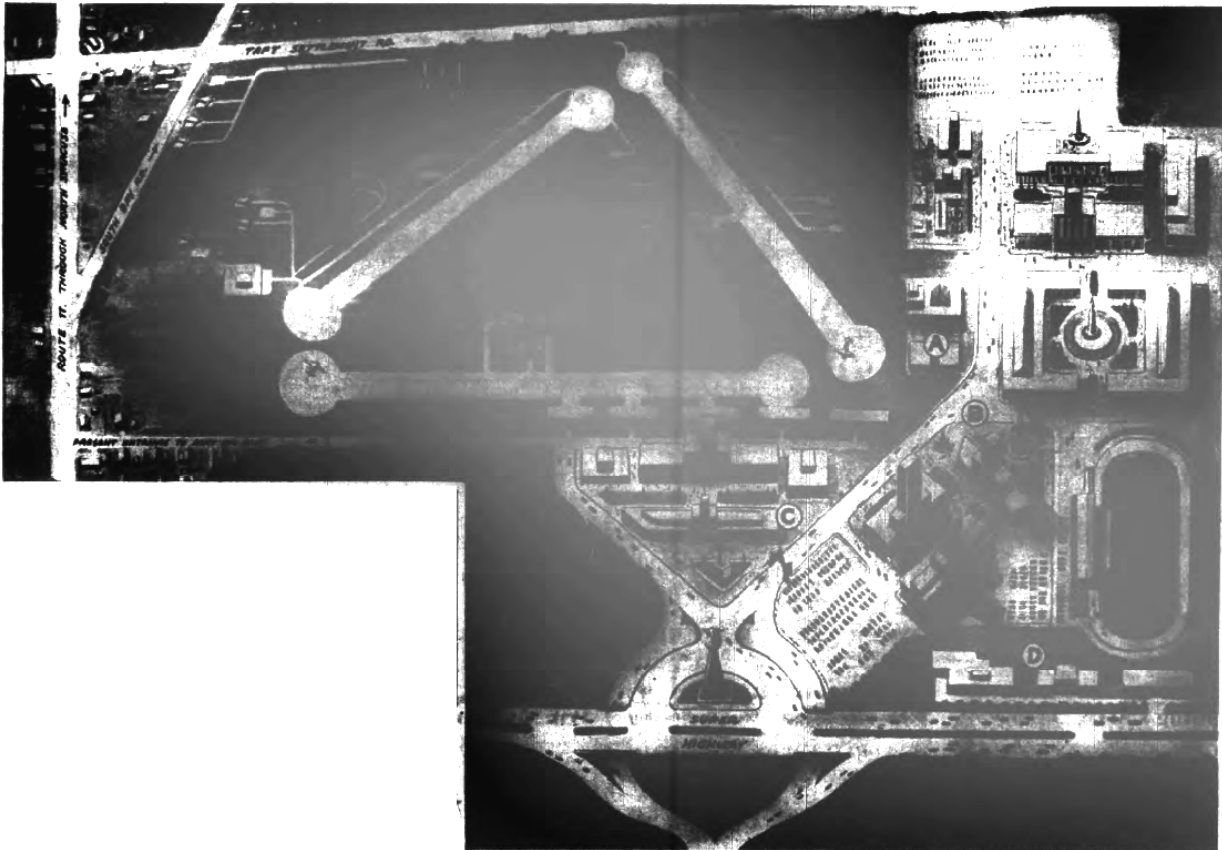


Figure Caption

Vision of the Future. Here is the Herald-American artist's conception of the proposed development on the Army Air Base land at Mattydale. (A) State Aviation School. (B) Buildings, race track, parking lots, and midway of the State Fair. (C) Permanent year-round industrial and agricultural exhibition buildings. (D) Maintenance pool for all motor vehicles of State Department of Public Works. Above (C) is the airport layout. An amphitheater would be constructed near the race track. At lower left is a lagoon for visitors who seek rest and quiet.

Once again the name Mattydale served as a convenient geographical tag with which to label a development. The proposed movement of the New York State Fair to land just east of the Army Air Base was described as moving the State Fair to Mattydale. The land east of the air base was actually in the towns of DeWitt and Cicero. Mattydale was and still is an unincorporated hamlet in the town of Salina. It was just the closest and most convenient place with which to label the proposed new fair grounds.

Syracuse Envisioned as State Hub in 1949

The Syracuse Herald American, Syracuse, NY
Sunday, October 28, 1945

Project Centers On Acquisitions of Army Air Base
State Fair Grounds, State Aviation School, Gigantic Airfield and Amphitheater Included
By Laurence J. O'Toole

SYRACUSE – Showplace and hub of New York State. Port of entry. Mecca of tourists. Air and highway confluence. Crossroads of the Empire State. A magnet drawing to it, like iron filings, the business and wealth of a nation.

This is the plan: The acquisition by the State of the Army Air Base at Mattydale and the transformation of the area's six square miles into---

1. The exposition grounds for the New York State Fair and a permanent industrial and agricultural exhibition.
2. A gigantic airfield.
3. The site of the proposed State aviation school.
4. A maintenance pool for all motor vehicles of the State Department of Public Works.
5. A modern, multiple racetrack.
6. An amphitheater and other outdoor recreational facilities at present unavailable in upstate New York.

All this and the projected State superhighway passing by the front door. And a broad offshoot from the highway and the front door into Syracuse.

The cost, taken from the state's vast postwar construction funds, would approach \$20,000,000. The transformation would consume three to five years.

Even the sponsor of the proposal cannot imagine all the possibilities of this stupendous scheme.

The sponsor is Assemblyman Clellan S. Forsythe of Syracuse, the city's baby legislator who will defy the crusty tradition which dictates that the first-term representatives keep mum.

Forsythe says he will introduce his plan in the Assembly after the turn of the year.

"It is now up to the people of Syracuse to give impetus to the demand for this development," the Assemblyman declared.

His project includes the disposition of the present State Fair grounds, and he is certain that industry, moving as it is in that direction, would quickly purchase the Belle Isle site. He feels too, that the Army may occupy the fair grounds for several years.

The superhighway which is fast becoming known as the "super thruway" would run from Buffalo to Albany, replacing Routes 5 and 20 as the principal midstate motor arteries and would

be connected by a network of highway veins to practically every community in Northern, Central, Western, Eastern and Southern New York.

At Albany the superhighway would join the several roads leading to New York City, Boston and the East. At Buffalo it would unite with the highways from the West. The heart of this circulatory system is Syracuse. The great airport would be a main point on the commercial airline routes which will trace the face of the nation and the world.

The Airport would be the central point in the web of airline routes which will touch at all the large municipalities in the State and at scores of cities and villages which at present have no air service.

Thousands of persons, among them many foreigners entering this country by plane, would arrive daily by air, road and rail at Syracuse. Immigration and customs officials would be stationed at the airport.

A good percentage of the travelers could scarcely fail to visit the city – for business, pleasure or rest. Whatever their purpose, they would spend money and the city's income would mount like the tithes of a Roman emperor.

Forsythe's proposed year round industrial and agricultural exhibition would stop many tourists and would induce them to remain in the city overnight or for several days. Vacationists and weekenders would pilgrimage to the exhibit.

The Exhibition, in Forsythe's mind, would show the products and progress of the State's huge variety of industry and agriculture and would demonstrate in a nutshell the State's business, labor and farm output.

There at a glance would be New York State.

The airfield would include the runways of the present Army Air Base and several new runways. It would provide hangars and repair shops for commercial airlines and would retain the current Army facilities for the peacetime purposes which undoubtedly the military will want. The Army barrack, located far from the entrance just off the superthruway, will remain.

The state aviation school would jut on the airfield immediately to its East and would provide facilities for housing and handling state owned planes. Forsythe believes several executive departments of the state in the future will own planes.

The Maintenance pool for all motor vehicles in the State Department of Public Works, according to the Assemblyman, would give the state something which it now needs: A central maintenance plant where all motor road building machinery and road maintenance equipment – snowplows, graders, tractors – could be rebuilt, repaired and dispatched to state streets as required.

As for the multiple race track affording separate lanes for automobile, horse-running, harness, motorcycle and perhaps dog racing, Forsythe says this:

“A new Racing plant could be made available for two or even three race meets during any season, thus providing upstate New York with recreational facilities which are amply available to the people of downstate and Metropolitan New York.

The amphitheater is a facility which Forsythe contends is a necessity, not only to the tremendous exposition grounds which he would develop, but to Syracuse itself. It would give the city an adequate place in which to schedule big civic, political and recreational affairs.

Should the Olympics be revived, as they doubtlessly will be, Syracuse with the superthruway exposition grounds, the airport and the amphitheater would be a leading contender to play host for the games.

Read what Forsythe says: “It could not have been foreseen that the Federal Government would take over the State Fair Grounds for four years or more, nor that a windstorm would destroy the grandstand and that the State Fair race track would be rendered practically useless because of disuse. Also, the break in the refuse dikes of the Solvay Process Company flooded the Fair Grounds with a silt that has made reclamation difficult.

“To restore the Fair Grounds would cost a lot of money. Careful consideration should be given whether such expenditures are justifiable in view of the definite restriction of future growth, because adjacent land no longer is suitable.

“By replacing the State Fair buildings with a new type of exposition building on the Army Air Base land, together with the buildings of the State Aviation Institute and the proposed State Highway Department structures, there would be ample buildings to accommodate as large a crowd as any exposition could draw, with buildings available for an all-year exposition for business, industry and agriculture.

“Three thousand acres of air base land and several hundred acres adjacent are ideal for the purpose.”

SUNDAY, OCT. 28, 1945

Forsythe State Fair Plan Would Benefit Syracuse

In its news columns today the **HERALD-AMERICAN** presents a plan which Assemblyman Forsythe has prepared and submitted to Governor Dewey and State Commissioner of Agriculture DuMond for moving the State Fair grounds and buildings to the Army Air Base when that site becomes available.

The Forsythe proposal outlines a very comprehensive, and it seems to us very desirable development. The relocated State Fair establishment would be adjacent to the proposed bomber base airport which, according to Park Commissioner Barry's program is to handle all commercial aviation including transport, cargo and chartered planes.

This great development, unique in the history of this Central New York section, would be flanked on the South by the new State superhighway which is to run from New York to Buffalo. The Forsythe plan, as submitted to the Governor and Commissioner of Agriculture, contemplates construction of a central maintenance plant in the new

fair ground vicinity, where snowplows, graders, tractors and other equipment required for maintenance of what ultimately will be one of the world's greatest highways would be repaired and dispatched to different areas across the State.

Altogether this mammoth project would constitute the outstanding post-war undertaking of the State and city.

If the Forsythe plan were followed in its general aspects this community would possess one of the show places of the country, with modern fair buildings, a great airport and the principal maintenance facilities of one of the world's greatest highways, all grouped in a single harmonious development.

Governor Dewey ought to support this proposed development. The State Fair is a State institution, of vital importance to our agriculturists. If the Forsythe plan were followed, it seems obvious that as a result of increased accessibility and improved facilities, the State Fair would develop into one of the great agricultural and perhaps industrial expositions in the country.

Syracusans ought to get behind the Forsythe proposal, too. This community has much to gain and certainly nothing to lose from this ambitious but by no means impractical proposal.

This editorial came from the same edition of the paper in which Forsythe proposed his mega development plan and by its tone it can be seen that the author was also riding the post war wave of enthusiasm for growth. A similar level of enthusiasm was last seen in the newspaper articles of the late 20s. That wave was damped by the Great Recession and then followed by the war. After living through 15 years of having little or nothing and then the war time rationing, people were eager for a new normal. It will be noticed that the editorial is really only concerned about the State Fair aspects of Forsythe's much more involved proposal.

Governor Dewey and The State Fair

Governor Dewey would prove himself to be a good friend of Syracuse and the State Fair if he were to submit to the State Legislature immediately after the first of the year a proposal to move the fair grounds at once to a new site adjacent to Army Air Base.

Assemblyman Forsythe has offered a tentative plan along this line. Opinion now seems to have settled on the proposition that the new grounds should be located adjacent to the base, on the new cross-State "Thruway" which the Governor properly is sponsoring.

Parks Commissioner Barry, who will have jurisdiction over the improvement and operation of the bomber base once it is transferred to the city for use as a commercial airport, indorses this program. He believes the State could obtain considerable revenue if the new buildings were constructed with a view to renting them for use in off seasons, one perhaps as a sports arena for hockey and other games, another as a convention hall, etc. Additional revenue might be obtained by using the grounds in Winter for skating and outdoor sports generally.

If the State Fair is to get started again at an early date, and if the future is to witness Fair expansion and progress that certainly is possible under favorable circumstances, it seems obvious that new grounds more advantageously situated are essential.

A site adjacent to the bomber base—say, a site across the "Thruway" to the South—would seem to offer just

the South—would seem to offer just about everything. The State Fair then would be located on the costly highway that the State is constructing which is to be one of the greatest thoroughfares on earth. The grounds would flank the commercial airport.

Thus the Fair would be easily accessible to all people traveling by automobile or airplane, while the railroads could run spurs into the grounds without much difficulty.

From the standpoint of transportation the setup could hardly be improved upon.

So far as surroundings are concerned, the improvement over the present site is so obvious and desirable that it need not be discussed.

The HERALD-AMERICAN emphasizes the urgent necessity for action at Albany because of the fact that if there is any procrastination the future of the State Fair might be jeopardized. The Army will withdraw from the present grounds sometime next year. But the grounds are now in such condition that there is little hope of holding a fair in '46. It is estimated that at least a half million dollars would have to be spent to restore the grounds and buildings.

What the State ought to do is obtain the new site and make the New York State Fair an outstanding exposition, along the lines of the Toronto Fair. This could be done at this proposed new location.

Will Governor Dewey help? It would greatly increase his prestige in this part of the State if he grasped this opportunity to aid what ought to be an outstanding State institution.

Why are Americans sensitive about

This is a second editorial from the Herald Journal supporting the proposed movement of the New York State Fair to Mattydale. There is a little more detail here about the benefits of such a change but still there is no mention of the other parts of Forsythe's mega-plan.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 1946

The Vote on the Issues— Keep State Fair at Present Site

Should the New York state fair be kept at its present location, moved to or near the Syracuse army air base and new thruway, or shifted to some other location?

A majority of the men and women of Syracuse and other parts of Central and Northern New York who answered the question, in our March "Vote on the Issues," believe that the exposition should be kept where it is at present.

The returns were as follows:

QUESTION: Do you believe the New York state fair should be—

1. Moved to the Syracuse
army air base?.....20.8 per cent
2. Located at some other
new site? 5.2 per cent
3. Kept where it is at
present?72.8 per cent
- Invalid votes 1.2 per cent

Many of the votes came from country people who are especially interested in the exposition because of its agricultural nature. They were the biggest group represented, but other ballots came in from shop workers, professional men, teachers, merchants, students, clerks and others.

The subject was and is one of particular interest, judging both by the number of ballots received and the deep thought given to it, as shown in the letters and comments received.

received.

We are publishing a cross-section of the comments on this page today and tomorrow and believe all the people in Post-Standard territory will find them of unusual interest.

The publication of the vote coincides with adoption by the legislature of a bill creating a commission to study the fair's future. It unquestionably will be approved by Gov. Dewey. When the commission is appointed, we will send the final figures to the chairman and secretary.

Early in April we will have another "Vote on the Issues." If you have any nominations for the question, we will be more than glad to get them. It is designed for readers, to show what public sentiment actually is on questions of the day.

★ ★ ★ - - -

This editorial came from the Post Standard, which doesn't seem to back the Forsythe plan. The paper had run a "Vote on the Issues" article earlier in March 1946. The people in their readership area were found to be overwhelmingly opposed to moving the State Fair from its traditional pre-war location on the south shore of Onondaga Lake. The publishing of these results coincided with the appointment of a commission to study the future of the New York State Fair.

Proposed Transfer of State Fair To Air Base Brings Opposition

RECOMMENDATION of the temporary State Fair Commission that the State Exposition be moved to a new location at the Mattydale Army Air Base brought forth opposition in Syracuse today.

Walter L. Welch, who has been one of the leading proponents for keeping the State Fair at its present location, and William A. Maloney, who has been active in a campaign for reclaiming Onondaga Lake, voiced the opposition.

Mayor Costello, on the other hand, announced his "wholehearted support" of the move while the executive committee of the State Federation of 4-H clubs in session here Wednesday drafted a resolution backing the proposal.

MALONEY SAID:

"This (Legislative) Commission, dominated by a Republican machine, both locally and at Albany, have bowed to the wishes of a small group in the Chamber of Commerce who have represented to the governor and the Legislature that they represent the people of Syracuse and Central New York, whereas this small group does not even represent the Chamber of Commerce.

"The Chamber of Commerce organized as they are for the welfare of the manufacturers and the merchants of the community forget that their welfare is closely tied in with the welfare of the other 99 per cent of the community.

"The continuance and expansion of the present Fair Grounds is closely tied in with the reclamation of Onondaga Lake and this decision of the Special Commission is a complete surrender to the selfish demands of the Solvay Process Co. in their desire to not only ruin Onondaga Lake but to 'fence us in.'"

Onondaga Lake but to "fence us in."

"**THE PEOPLE** of New York State will resent the spending of 12 million dollars for a group of buildings on a new site and it is all out of line with the message of Governor Dewey on economy.

"The Governor Dewey of February, 1947, is a different fellow, however, from candidate Dewey of 1946 when he said at Syracuse, according to the Press on Aug. 22, 'The invasion of Onondaga Lake is a perfect outrage,' and he promised that he would do something on the second day following. Five months have now passed and we are just where we started. This is, however, in line with his other promises such as the Thruway and other improvements but which now must wait. As Al Smith used to say, 'This is not the year.'

"All this is also tied in with the decision not to have a fair this year. Under the guise of helping agriculture they are actually doing many things to injure agriculture, like not giving us a fair this year and leaving out of the budget, funds for a branch of the State Employment Service which looked after procuring farm labor.

"One of the big jokes in this Forsythe plan is the mythical world's market at the new Fair Grounds site. Well, if this commission and their propagandists can move the world's market from New York City, they are magicians who will outdo Houdini.

"To sum up, the people have nothing to say at Albany."

other site would become a major purpose of this commission.

"The fact is that the possibilities of expansion of the present Fair Grounds to the shore of Onondaga Lake has received scant attention from the commission and there has been no study by a qualified group of architects. Until such a study has been made the commission cannot possibly claim to have adequately considered it. The halting of destructive acts detrimental to the rights of the people of the state in the present Fair Grounds area has also not evidently been considered by the commission to come within

the province of their recommendations.

"The site selected by the commission is on land that is unstable and entirely unsuited to the purposes of a great exposition. The average water table in the area is only two feet below the surface. The shape of the area proposed is roughly three times as long as it is wide, hemmed in between the Thruway and the runway of the airport parallel to it. An ideal exposition site should be approximately square.

"We believe that if citizens of this vicinity will drive through this proposed Mattydale site and then around Onondaga Lake to make comparisons with the apparent possibilities of our present fairgrounds extended to the shore of the lake, that they will be able to draw their own conclusions."

The temporary State Fair Commission had recommended that the State Fair be moved to a new location in Mattydale near the old Army Air Base. This brought the concept a step closer to reality and that was a battle call for the opposition. The political and business interests seemed to support the move while the rural and agricultural interests were against the move.

The Post Standard,
Syracuse, NY,
Thursday, September 2, 1948

NEGLECT STRESSED

"It is an historical fact, however, that the neglect of his and previous administrations of the department of public works to safeguard the riparian rights of the people of the state in Onondaga lake and the fair grounds area is largely responsible for such unfavorable conditions as exist there."

Welch continues: "The brutal fact is that the whole promotion to have the present fair grounds abandoned was worked out in Albany chiefly by Commissioners Sells and DuMond and the ball then handed to Assemblyman Clellan S. Forsythe of Syracuse to carry to the Syracuse chamber of commerce, and thence to the governor and the legislature, where it would be assured in advance of a favorable reception."

Walter L. Welch was the executive secretary of the Committee for an Expanded Exposition on Onondaga Lake. He was an opponent of moving the fair to Mattydale. The above was quoted from an article by Welch called, "Why Only a Limited Fair in 1948." The original article was published in The Rural New Yorker. Welch claimed that Forsythe's plan had been worked out by persons in Albany who wanted the fair grounds to leave Onondaga Lake. The Solvay Process company might have been behind this activity, in an effort to build out their Solvay plant all the way to the lake shore.

Saratoga Now Seeking The State Fair

Reference was made in these columns Wednesday, Feb. 16, to reports that in case of a Democratic gubernatorial victory in 1950, the powerful Albany Democratic organization would move to build the proposed new Empire State Exposition on a site in the Capital district.

This rumor is confirmed, in part, by Charles J. Hogan, Onondaga County Democratic chairman. Returning from a trip to Albany, Saturday, he said (see the Sunday Herald-American) that the Albany Republican county chairman and E. Roland Harriman, prominent race track sportsman, are trying to persuade the Legislature to transfer the State Fair to Saratoga Springs, near Albany.

Hogan blames Republicans for this move. But of course the Dewey administration is specifically committed to erecting the proposed State Exposition in Onondaga County, if a new exposition project is approved during the Governor's term. The real danger from the Onondaga County standpoint would appear to be that in case of the election of a Democratic Governor and Legislature in 1950, the Albany O'Connell machine, which dominates all political affairs in the Capital district, would have sufficient influence to force adoption of a plan for providing a State Exposition in that section, to supersede the present State Fair.

Hogan remarks that he warned Republican legislators a year and a half ago that unless they dropped the plan to build a new Empire State Exposition at Mattydale,

new Empire State Exposition at Mattydale, other cities would be seeking to gain the exposition for their neighborhoods.

But it should be emphasized, good-naturedly, of course, that this newspaper has for some time been emphasizing that if the people and varied interests of this community did not push the broad plan for the erection of a modern Empire State Exposition on the Mattydale site owned by the United States Government, there was grave danger that ultimately we might lose the State Fair.

Neither individuals nor institutions can stand still in this world for long—there must be progress or deterioration: nothing is static. Circumstances have combined during the postwar years to offer an unprecedented opportunity to insure the retention of the State Fair indefinitely, in the form of an expanded and modernized Empire State Exposition, along the broad, comprehensive lines of the Toronto and Dallas expositions.

Governor Dewey was known to favor such a program. The Mattydale site, located on the State Thruway which is to be one of the world's greatest highways, seemed ideal for exposition purposes. It was owned by the Government and could be obtained for exposition purposes at slight cost and with the certainty that no crooked money could be made by anyone in land deals. The Temporary State Fair Commission, created to study the whole State Fair problem, came forward with detailed plans along this line. The State had in view a plan to build a wide, slightly boulevard from Syracuse right into the exposition grounds. The whole setup seemed most appealing, from every standpoint, particularly from that of Syracuse and Central New York.

We think it behooves every good citizen interested in the future progress and prosperity of Syracuse and upstate New York

to get behind the Mattydale State Exposition proposal. If true unity were displayed throughout this section, the exposition proposal formulated by the Temporary State Fair Commission *would* be adopted—we are sure of that in view of the Governor's favorable attitude. But if the individuals and interests which have been so voluble in opposing the exposition proposal, continue the battle, we shall wake up some morning and find the new Empire State Exposition rising in Saratoga, Albany, Rochester or somewhere else, whose people would be only too happy to get it.

The Syracuse Journal,
Syracuse, NY,
Monday, February 21, 1949

The good folks of Saratoga Springs probably thought, if the State Fair was being relocated, then why weren't they in consideration for being the new location. This also might have been a political ploy to kill the entire fair movement effort and keep the fair at its pre-war location. The opposition group might have been sending Syracuse a message: Move it and you might lose it.

The Herald-Journal, Syracuse, NY,
Wednesday, March 23, 1949

Mattydale Site Should Be Protected

The Legislature has adopted and sent to the Governor, Assemblyman Rulison's bill giving the State Public Works Department another year to complete plans for a State exposition on the Mattydale site.

As Governor Dewey will of course sign this legislation, final decision on what is to be done about the exposition proposal formulated by the Temporary State Fair Commission headed by Clell Forsythe of Syracuse, will be delayed at least until 1950.

Meanwhile, what of the Mattydale site?

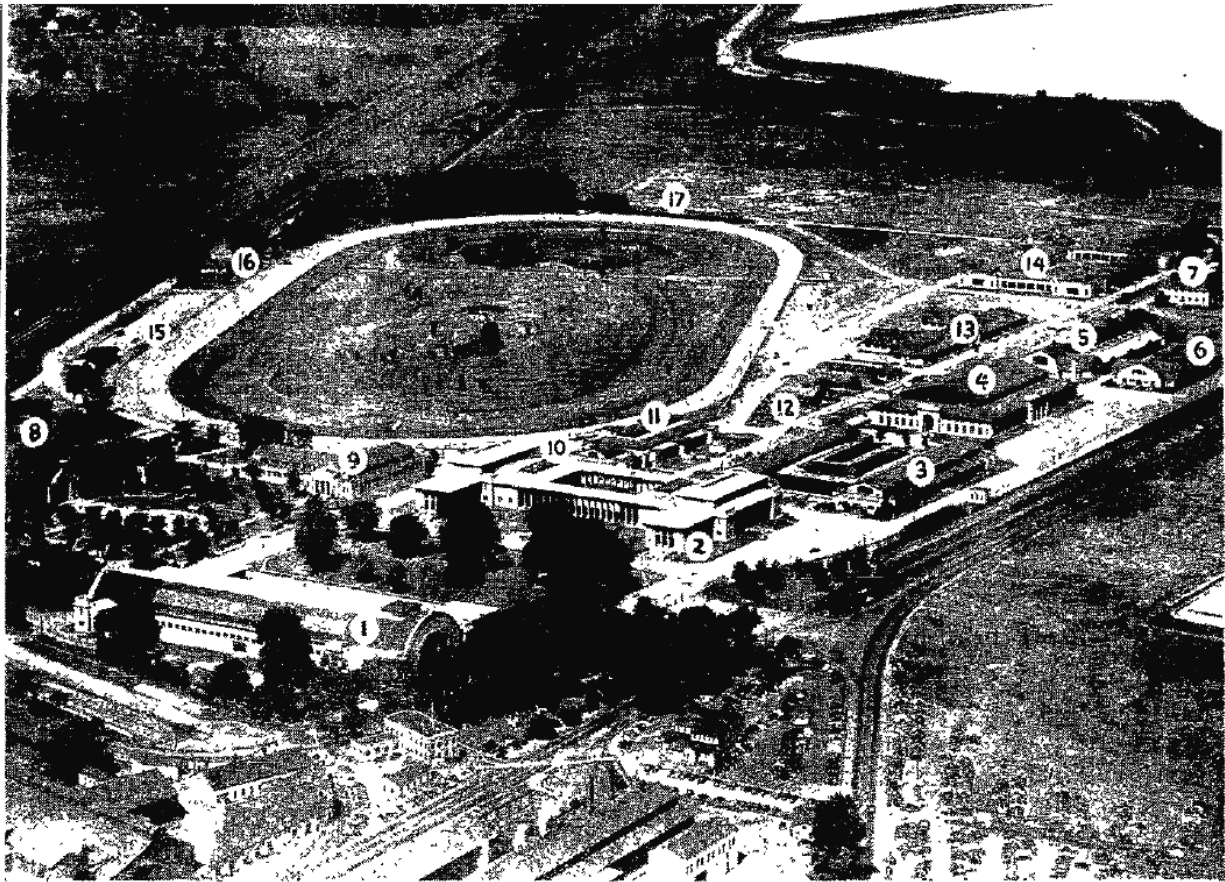
There have been rumors that land speculators would like to get hold of this property which is adjacent to Hancock Airport that is to be placed in full operation shortly. The land is now owned by the Federal Government.

As there is no possibility of an immediate decision on the State exposition proposal, the State certainly should move at once to prevent private exploitation of this property. The State Government should either acquire title to the land or at the very least begin negotiations with the proper Federal authorities to preserve this site for public use.

The HERALD-JOURNAL favors the Empire State exposition proposal recommended by the Forsythe committee. For it believes that many beneficent results would flow from a progressive development of that broad character.

But whether the land finally were to be used as an exposition site or for some other public purpose, certainly so valuable an area adjoining the airport should be protected from private exploitation, at least until we are certain that it is *not* needed for future public use.

As the decision on moving the State Fair to Mattydale was drawn out other developers began to eye the former Army Air Base as land ripe for development. This editorial suggested that the State acquire title to the property from the Federal government thus preserving the land as a location for the new fair.



FAIRGROUNDS ALL READY FOR TOMORROW'S OPENING. Here is the New York State Fair Grounds as it appeared from the air just a few days ago as corps of workmen were feverishly busy getting everything in shipshape order for tomorrow's opening. Shown in photo by Arthur J. Cornelius, chief of Herald-American photographers, from Ward Air Service plane, are: 1. Manufacturers Bldg.; 2. State Institutions Bldg.; 3. Cattle Bldg.; 4. Coliseum; 5. Draft and Show Horse Bldg.;

6. Boys' and Girls' Livestock Pavilion; 7. Boys' and Girls' Bldg.; 8. Horticultural Bldg.; 9. Television Bldg.; 10. Grange Bldg.; 11. Poultry Bldg.; 12. Agricultural Museum; 13. Sheep and Swine Bldg.; 14. Farm Machinery Bldg.; 15. Grandstand; 16. Clubhouse, and 17. Section of race horse barns. Shown in foreground is a section of the sprawling Halcomb plant of the Crucible Steel Company of America and its vast parking area; in upper right, new waste beds of Solvay Process Co.

A limited fair was held in 1948. Finally, in 1949, the New York State Fair was held on its traditional site for the first time since 1941, when the State Fairs had been brought to a halt by the war.

County GOP Doesn't Rate In Fair Plans

ONONDAGA COUNTY Republicans will draw a blank in the proposed shakeup of top State Fair personnel, it was learned today.

Proponents of a new and expanded fair, headed by former Assemblyman Clellan S. Forsythe of Syracuse, however, will be given powerful moral support.

The proposed plan, now under consideration by Gov. Thomas E. Dewey and his advisers, calls for appointment of Millard W. Hawk of Constantia as director of the fair.

HAWK WOULD succeed Bligh A. Dodds of Gouverneur in the \$8,500-a-year job. Dodds would be given another position in the state government, probably paying more money.

The post of superintendent of grounds, vacated last September by

the death of Charles D. Osterhout, Onondaga Republican, would be abolished. The job paid about \$4,900 a year and maintenance including a car and a home on the fair grounds.

Many Onondagans have been seeking the Osterhout post since last November's election in which the Republicans lost control of city hall here. The state probably will decide to eliminate the job, however, as a means of economizing in the State Fair Budget, it was learned.

THE PLAN would place Earl C. Foster, deputy state commissioner of agriculture, actually in full charge of the fair with Hawk acting as Foster's executive assistant. This plan was carried out unofficially last year.

Both Foster and Hawk were instrumental in developing the recommendations of the Temporary State Fair Commission, headed by Forsythe, which urged switching the site of the fair to Mattydale and spending \$50,000,000 for developing a year-round civic, industrial and agricultural exhibition. Governor Dewey lauded the work of the commission.

Hawk, an assistant civil engineer in the state department of public

works, drafted plans for protecting approaches and other plans for the proposed fair at Mattydale. He works in the Syracuse office of the State Public Works Department but resides in Constantia which is in Oswego County.

Forsythe Plan advocates were to be placed in charge of the State Fair according to the master plan. Evidently the plan actually called out who should be in charge: Millard W. Hawk of Constantia was to be the Director of the Fair. The deputy state commissioner of Agriculture would be Earl C. Foster would be in charge of the fair and Hawk would be his executive assistant. Both of these men had worked on Forsythe's Temporary State Fair Commission and were in favor of the move of the fair to Mattydale. However, it was not to be.



HAROLD L. CREAL

Harold Creal Named State Fair Director

Herald-Journal Wire

ALBANY—Republican Assemblyman Harold L. Creal of Homer, Cortland County, has been appointed director of the New York State Fair, State Agriculture Commis-

ed director of the New York State Fair, State Agriculture Commissioner C. Chester, DuMond announced today.

Creal, 53, will take over the \$9,500-a-year post immediately. Earl C. Foster, assistant commissioner, has been acting director since last May 4, when Bligh A. Dodds resigned.

CREAL, A native of Chautauqua County, graduated from Cornell University's State College of Agriculture in 1921 and has since operated the Crouse Farms near Homer.

Married and the father of two children, he has been in the Assembly since 1939, where he is chairman of the revision committee and on the agriculture committee. For 19 years he had represented the Town of Homer in the Cortland County Board of Supervisors.

ORGANIZATIONS HE has belonged to include director of the Central New York Regional Market Authority, the Glange, Farm Bureau Federation and the Holstein-Friesian Association.

He is a member of the First Congregational Church of Homer, the Homer Masonic Lodge and the Cortland Rotary Club.

The State Fair in Syracuse will run this year from Sept. 2 to 9.

Harold L. Creal was appointed State Fair Director, instead of the then acting Director Earl C. Foster. Creal was from Homer in Cortland County and his constituents were more rural and agriculturally oriented. The last hope of the Forsythe camp, for moving the State Fair to Mattydale, probably died with the appointment of Creal.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 3, 1952

Facilities Needed to Handle Big State Fair Crowds

The State Fair urgently needs more parking space and a more extensive highway leading to and from the grounds.

This was clearly established by this year's Labor Day traffic tangle, which was along the same lines as the 1949 mixup.

The congestion was so bad that State Fair officers were forced to close the gates for an hour, until the congestion had been relieved.

This 1952 State Fair is being staged in a big way. It certainly bears out the prediction made by Director Creal in a signed editorial in the Sunday HERALD-AMERICAN, Aug. 24, that this year's show would be the greatest in the whole history of New York State Fairs.

That the public comprehended that the Fair was being staged this year on an unprecedented scale certainly has been amply confirmed by the big rush of people to the grounds.

Under these circumstances, it is unfortunate indeed that many people who tried to get to the grounds Labor Day finally gave it up and returned home.

This sort of thing won't do at all—if our State Fairs are to be as good as this year's and vast multitudes of people are thus to be attracted to the grounds, then facilities should be made available to take care of them.

care of them.

As we understand it, it was the jamming of parking facilities on the grounds that forced the temporary closing of the gates. Inevitably, closing of gates increased congestion on the main highway leading to the fair. Several years ago when former Assemblyman Clell Forsythe came forward with a broad and carefully prepared plan for moving the State Fair to Mattydale on a site adjacent to the new State Thruway and to Hancock Airport, many shortsighted people pooh-pooed that sound proposal.

But developments since then have established that the former assemblyman certainly knew what he was talking about.

The Mattydale site had everything from the transportation standpoint. It was located directly on what is to be the world's greatest highway, also on the greatest airport in this part of the country. Moreover, it was so situated that broad boulevards could have been constructed serving it from every direction.

Obviously a blunder was made when the Forsythe plan was rejected.

But all this is water over the dam—the important angle at the moment is that if we are to keep the present State Fair Ground, then more parking space must be provided in the grounds and more highways must be provided leading to and from the grounds.

Emergency provisions should be made before the 1953 fair to give the big crowds a better break.

The Forsythe plan was not accepted and the State Fair remained where it was before the war. This editorial was a bit of sour grapes from the Herald-Journal, which had supported the Mattydale State Fair idea, pointing out that the traffic jams at the old fair grounds would not have happened if the State Fair had been moved to Mattydale.

SUMMARY

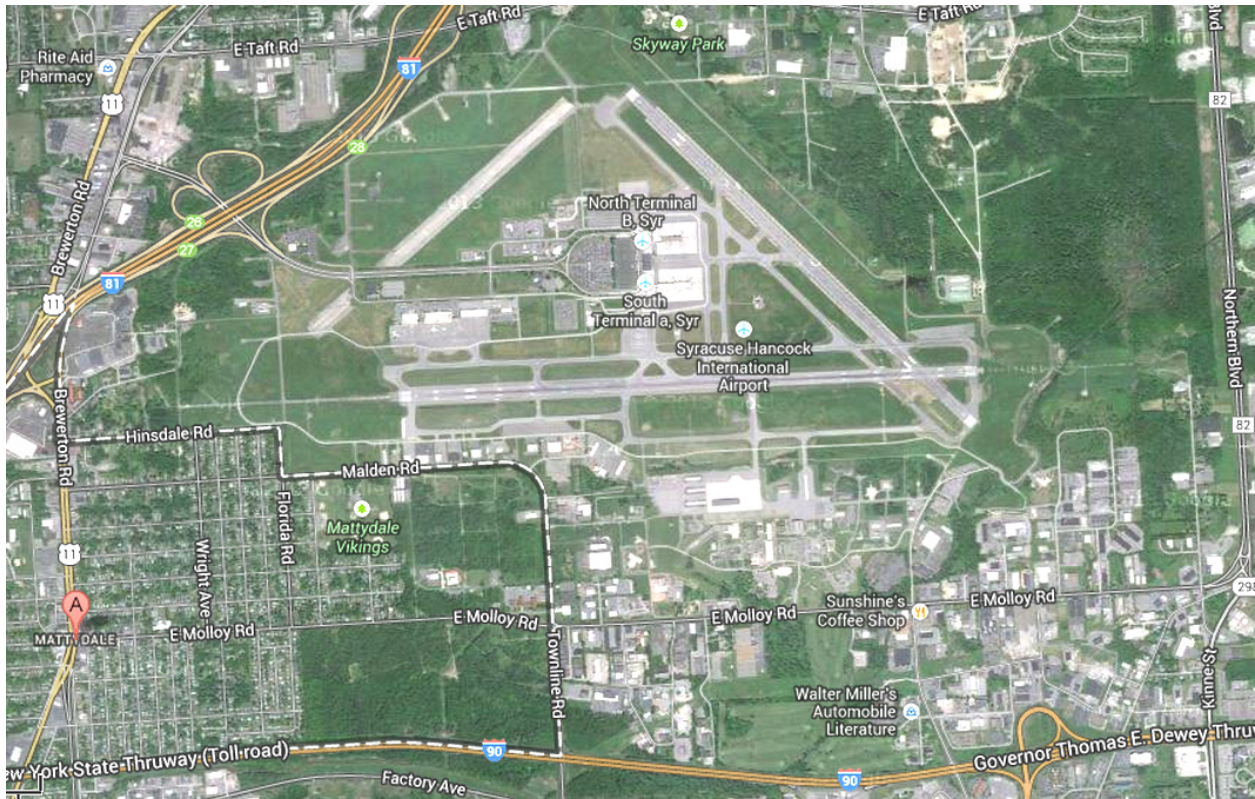
The original Forsythe plan called for the acquisition by the State of the Army Air Base at Mattydale and then on the area's six square miles to create the following entities. These have been rearranged from the original order into a decreasing probability order.

1. A gigantic airfield.
2. The exposition grounds for the New York State Fair and a permanent industrial and agricultural exhibition.
3. A modern, multiple racetrack.
4. The site of the proposed State aviation school.
5. A maintenance pool for all motor vehicles of the State Department of Public Works.
6. An amphitheater and other outdoor recreational facilities at present unavailable in upstate New York.

The air base had been planned for some time to become a Municipal Airport after the war. There was really no way that was not going to happen. The rest of the grand plan ran into the harsh reality of the returning veterans and a massive housing shortage. The long time supporters of the Onondaga Lake Reclamation effort were very much against moving the location of the fair.

The burst of post war pride, enthusiasm and a desire to grab part of the peace dividend, in part, brought forth the Forsythe plan. The can-do attitude, that was a carryover from the mobilization of the entire US economy to fight the war, made the Forsythe plan seem possible. However, the country was about to find itself engulfed in a severe housing shortage, with the return of all the servicemen from overseas. Civilian construction had been banned during the war years and that industry had to be re-started and ramped up to meet an historic demand. The barracks at the former Mattydale Army Airbase were converted into housing units for the returning servicemen and their families. From 1946 until 1951 anything that could be turned into housing on the former air base was used for sheltering veterans.

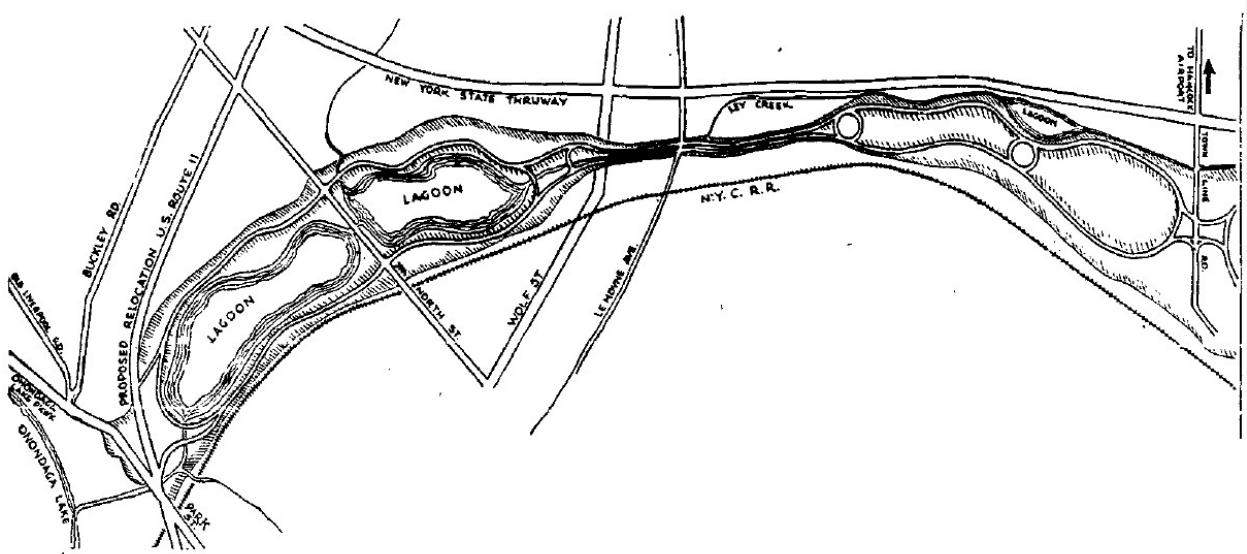
For security reasons the barracks had been constructed at scattered locations around the base. Spreading out the barracks reduced the possible damage due to sabotage or fires. After the war that meant that the veteran housing covered almost all of the area where Forsythe had planned his mega development. The city had leased the former air base land containing the barracks for five years. During the tenure of this lease, the State Fair was able to reconstitute itself at the old Fair Grounds and, in 1949, start up once again at full strength. The window for Forsythe's plan had closed and Mattydale never got its State Fair.



The image above shows the area around Hancock International Airport today (2013). The Air National Guard occupied the area south of the airport and east of Townline Road. The northeastern corner of the property was taken back by the U.S. Government for the NORAD Complex and a small housing development for the military personnel working at the complex. Commercial businesses were established in the section bordered by E. Molloy Road on the north, Townline Road on the west and the NYS Thruway on the south. In the northwest corner formed by Thompson Road and the Thruway was the Brookline Golf Course.

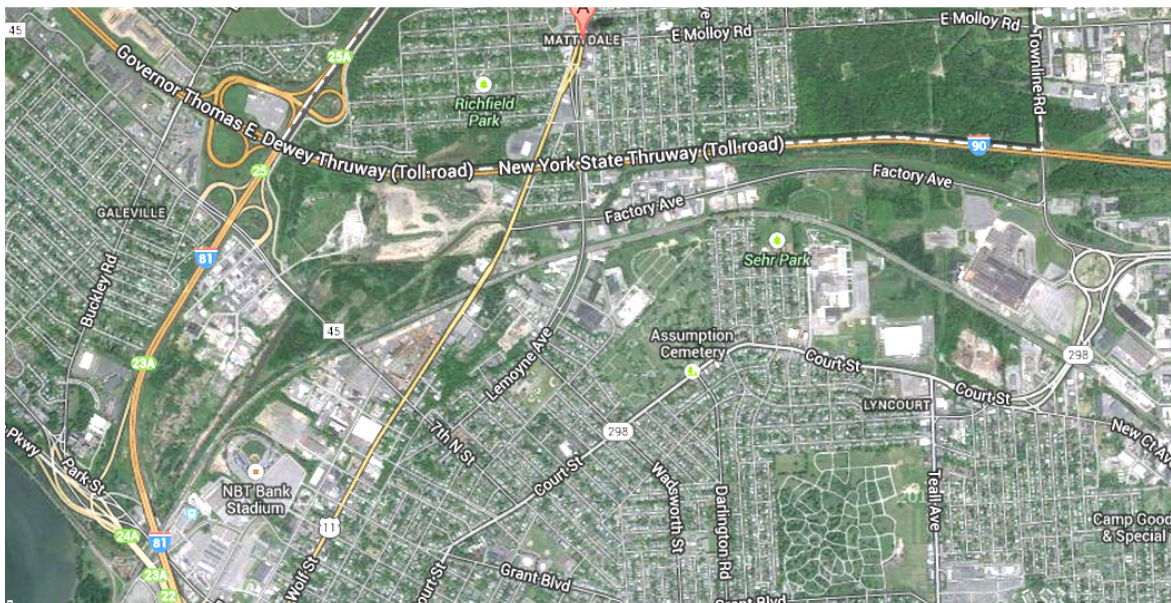
APPENDIX

A Parkway Too Far – Forsythe’s Last Gasp



Syracuse Herald-American, Syracuse, NY, Sunday, June 14, 1953

Figure Caption – PROJECTED LEY CREEK PARKWAY. Here is a sketch of Ley Creek Parkway (shaded area) as proposed by the New York Legislative State Fair Commission six years ago. The plan, which former Assemblyman Clellan S. Forsythe believes might well be applied today, calls for utilization of Ley Creek wasteland and the building of parallel highways and a parkway from Onondaga Parkway northeast to Town Line Rd. The parkway would link the Thruway with U. S. Route 11, as relocated under the arterial program and Onondaga Lake parkway and would provide access to Hancock Airport and the proposed Syracuse Industrial Park. The parkway would be landscaped and shrubbed and would contain several lagoons.



Reality became a landfill bordering on the Ley Creek Sewage Treatment Plant that had been built under the WPA during 1938-40. On the eastern side of the planned parkway, the Industrial Park – General Motors – and the GM traffic circle were already planned and those projects did materialize.