

# BEAUTIFUL BELGIAN VILLAGE

APRIL 11, 1963

GROUND BREAKING AT THE NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR 1964-1965



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Remarks by Belgian and World's Fair officials at the Belgian Village groundbreaking ceremonies, New York World's Fair, Thursday, April 11, 1963.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD C. PATTERSON, JR. [Chief of Protocol]: Mr. Moses, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. I am privileged to begin these ceremonies by presenting a man who is an expert on trade fairs and international fairs and has spent most of his time in the planning and development of expositions. I am happy to introduce to you my colleague, Mr. Allen Beach.

MR. ALLEN BEACH [Director, International Exhibits]: Thank you Ambassador Patterson, Mr. De Rijdt, Mr. Vande-Velde and Mr. Moses. Governor Poletti, who

is again abroad in behalf of the Fair, asked me to convey his congratulations to Mr. De Rijdt and Mr. Vande-Velde and all those who worked to bring the Belgian Village to reality. I would like to add that you, Mr. De Rijdt, and your associates, have come a long way over a rather bumpy road since the first day we met in New York early in 1961 to discuss a Belgian Village at the Fair.

I am sure Mr. Gates Davison of our International Division staff, who has worked most closely with you, will agree when I say that if bulldog tenacity is a virtue, you, Mr. De Rijdt, are a very virtuous man. We both admire you for your persistence and faith in the face of many problems and for your desire to present your gay Belgian Village to millions of visitors. Your determination is evident today, as construction starts on this 164,000 sq. ft. site.

We are all delighted that this village will be in our midst; I am especially delighted because I witnessed the

**Cover:** Artist's interpretation of section of Belgian Village superimposed on a detail of Architect Alfons De Rijdt's blueprint.

Officiating at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Belgian Village: (left to right) Robert Moses, Fair president; Gates Davison, of the Fair's International staff; Gerard Vande-Velde, associate pavilion designer and Alfons De Rijdt, designer.

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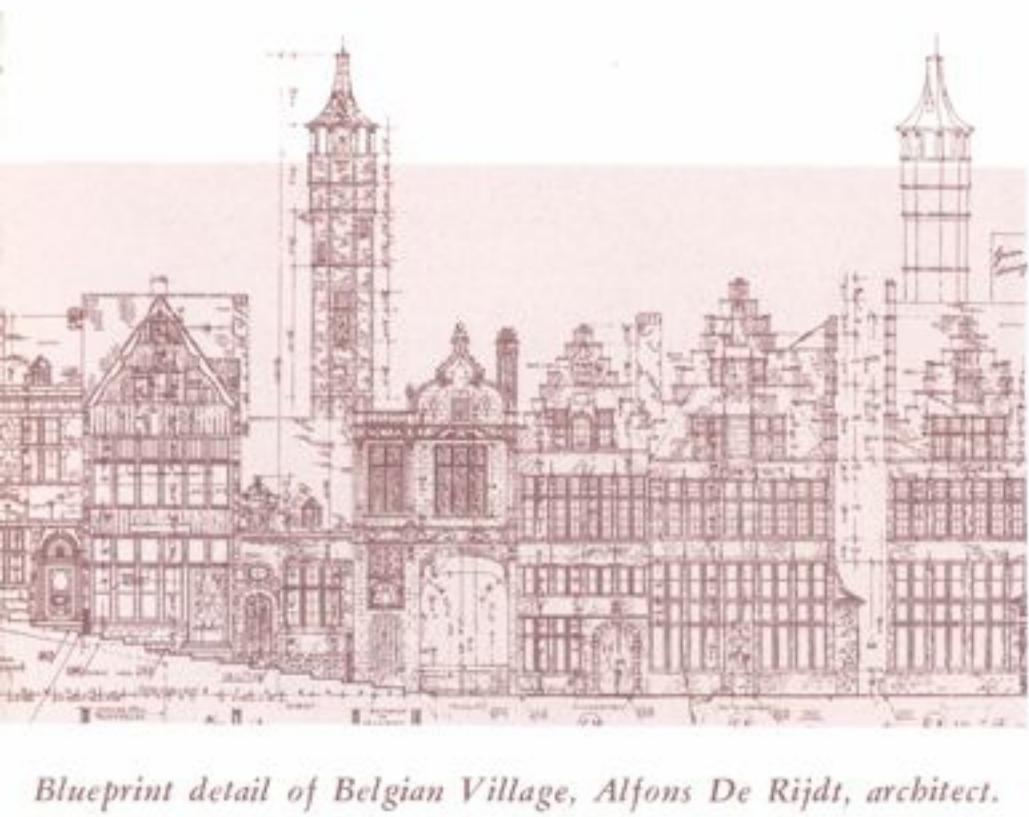
tremendous success of the "Belgique Joyeuse" designed by Mr. De Rijdt for the Brussels World's Fair of 1958 when I was deputy director of the U. S. Building and Exhibits. I recall many a happy hour spent in the "Belgique Joyeuse," enjoying food and drink, colorful shops, dancers and music. "Belgique Joyeuse" was a gathering place for those who wished to fall completely into the spell of the gayety and fun of old-time Belgium. Next year on this site we will see an even greater Belgian Village, created by the original designer, Alfons De Rijdt and his associate Mr. Gerard Vande-Velde. Be assured that I will be among the thousands present on opening day to drink a glass of Belgian beer and eat a bag of *pommes frites*. Congratulations.

AMBASSADOR PATTERSON: Thank you Mr. Beach. May I add that Mr. De Rijdt also built the Belgian Village which was a prime attraction at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. His building at the Brussels' Fair in 1958, by all accounts, was the gayest and most popular of that remarkable exposition. The Belgian Village he has planned for our New York World's Fair in 1964-1965, will be, I am told, one of the largest and most beautiful of our international presentations, with no less than 120 dwellings, including a church and a town hall.

The New York World's Fair is delighted that Mr. De Rijdt, Mr. Vande-Velde and others have brought their talents to this Fair. I have the great privilege of presenting to you, Mr. Alfons De Rijdt, president of the Belgian Village.

MR. ALFONS DE RIJDT: Mr. Moses, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank you — all of you — American and Belgian, for making this occasion possible. Without the outstanding cooperation of the Fair authorities our village would still be a dream, and without the help of the Belgian authorities it would be an empty dream. We shall create a miniature Belgium in Flushing Meadow Park. Visitors will see buildings they have seen in Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Liege, Mons, Bastogne and other cities. We hope our friends will like us more through visiting the Belgian Village, and we hope those who don't know Belgium will come to visit her. We will offer fun, music, entertainment and fine foods, and you will see the work of Belgium's finest artisans. We will devote part of the village to Belgian industry — for our small country is an industrial giant. We will show you all the best that we have. We know you will like it. Thank you.

AMBASSADOR PATTERSON: Thank you very



Blueprint detail of Belgian Village, Alfons De Rijdt, architect.

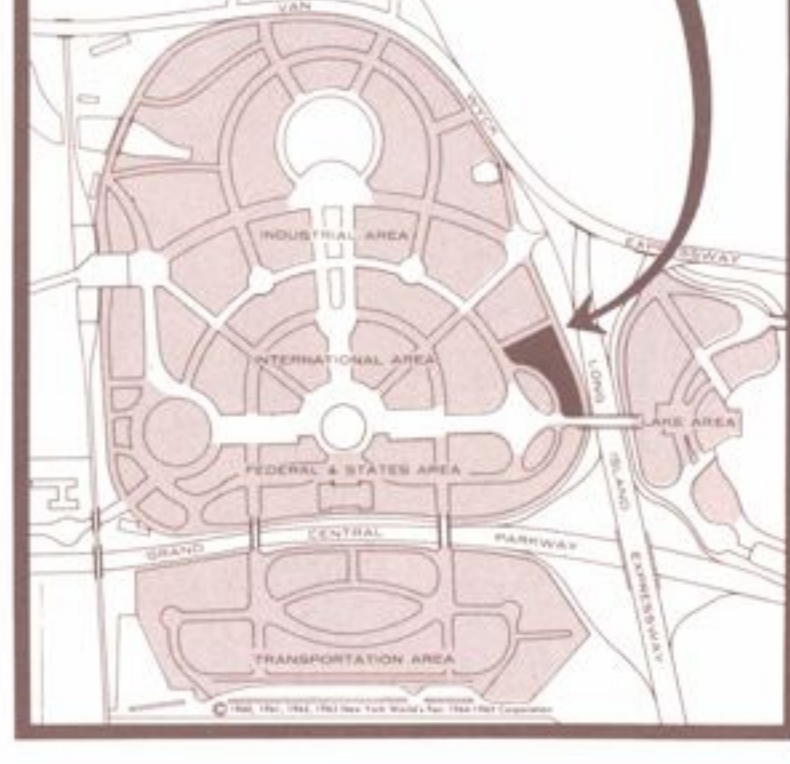


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## THE BELGIAN VILLAGE

will occupy a 164,811 sq. ft. site in the International Area.



much, Mr. De Rijdt. The final speaker, ladies and gentlemen, is the man under whose watchful guidance thousands of men will continue to work for some time to complete this greatest of all fairs. His task requires infinite knowledge, which he has, with a superb ability to get things done. I have the privilege of presenting to you the chief executive of the World's Fair, 1964-1965, the Honorable Robert Moses.

ROBERT MOSES: Ambassador Patterson, Mr. De Rijdt, and friends. I little thought, back in 1939 and 1940, that I would be back here again with my former associates at another World's Fair. One reason we are so confident of getting the Fair finished on schedule is that these same people who worked for the earlier fair, through the years 1937 and 1938 — and know all about the grounds and topography, what's below the surface and above it — are with us again to carry on the program.

I like this Belgian Village because, in addition to representing the products of the country and its culture, it will also provide a good deal of play and amusement which we need in the Fair. It's always a happy thing to be dealing with professionals who know the problems and the time necessary to solve them. In this case, we are dealing with real experts.

Alfons De Rijdt thanks Robert Moses, Fair president, for a souvenir medal of the Fair. In turn, he presents Mr. Moses with a token of his gratitude. Gates Davison, of the Fair staff, looks on.



## BEAUTIFUL BELGIUM, INC.

ALFONS DE RIJDT, President and Architect, Beautiful Belgium, Inc.  
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