



Empire State Building: The Making of a Landmark

By John Tauranac

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The Empire State Building is the companion volume to the Museum of the City of New York's definitive exhibition: "A Dream Well Planned: The Empire State Building."

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Empire State Building: The Making of a Landmark By John Tauranac Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

When the 1250-foot Empire State Building opened in the Depression year of 1931, it was the world's tallest building. Today, though it ranks only fourth in the world, it retains a special place in the hearts of New Yorkers. Tauranac tells of the "odd couple" responsible for the ESB: millionaire John J. Raskob and his troubleshooter, Alfred E. Smith, former governor of New York. Both had come from humble backgrounds and were progressive Irish Catholic Democrats who were pro-business and anti-prohibition. We are shown the frantic "race" for height with the neighboring Chrysler Building, also under construction, and how the ESB finally won out. Among the facts cited here about the ESB: it sits on the site of the original Waldorf Astoria hotel; its mast was designed to moor dirigibles; it has appeared in about 90 movies, including King Kong; it was only 50% rented until WWII; in heavy fog in 1945, a B-25 bomber crashed into it, killing 14; it has its own post office; and, virtually unique in Manhattan, its 13th floor is appropriately numbered. Tauranac (Essential New York) has written an informative and exciting biography of Manhattan's most famous building. Photos not seen by PW.

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From Library Journal

Surprisingly enough, the Empire State Building, "the world's greatest skyscraper" and formerly the world's tallest until the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center and Chicago's Sear's Tower took that distinction away, has never before received book-length treatment. Tauranac is a native of New York City and an accomplished architectural historian. He is the author of two previous books on the city's architecture, *Essential New York* (LJ 10/1/79. o.p.) and *Elegant New York* (Abbeville, 1985. o.p.). He has researched his subject thoroughly, even in the famous Avery Library Archive. His book covers almost all aspects of the great monument, from planning and conception through design and construction to the unfolding of its subsequent reputation. Anyone interested in architecture will find this book entertaining and informative. It is a welcome addition to book collections on skyscrapers, New York City, and Art Deco architecture. Peter Kaufman, Boston Architectural Ctr.

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From [Booklist](#)

A building that is a movie star unto itself deserves a writer of such contagious enthusiasm as Tauranac. Upon finishing his bio-(or constructo-) graphy, one feels pulled again to gaze at the solitary tower and see behind its limestone facade the architects and contractors who built it in 18 short months, *and* in the teeth of the Depression. As much a statement of capitalist tenacity as rentable office space, the building's iconic status was immediate, and not only for being "the world's tallest." Its modern, art deco-y appearance was unique, its technology was the acme of the skyscraper age, and its splendid isolation in the middle of Manhattan riveted attention. How it became sited at the corner of 34th Street and 5th Avenue forms one of Tauranac's fascinating stories, to which he adds vignettes about the personalities of financiers and their promoter in chief, former governor and presidential also-ran Al Smith, followed by notable events, such as the amusingly futile attempts to dock dirigibles at the top or the tragic airplane collision with the 79th floor in 1945. A fascinating, self-propelling, and definitive history of the building. *Gilbert Taylor*

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