

History of the Memphis Pyramid



The City's Egyptian Inspirations

The city of **Memphis, Tennessee** is named after the ancient Egyptian city of the same name. As such, it is said that there is a certain fondness for all things Egyptian.

Both cities reside next to a river with Mississippi River being referred to as the American Nile.

There are permanent displays of Egyptian antiquities at the Art Museum of the University of Memphis. The gates, walls and columns at the Memphis Zoo are



decorated with Egyptian motifs and hieroglyphs. There was once even a football team called Memphis Pharaohs, though it only lasted two years.

However, there is one more aspect that is missing in all of the Tennessean city's adherence to its namesake.

The Pyramid

Leading up to the Pyramid

Before the modern Pyramid stood, there were other attempts or ideas for a pyramid in Memphis.

There was a 100 foot tall wooden pyramid called

“Pyramid of Cheops”

built in 1897. It was served as a contribution to Nashville’s Centennial Exposition from Memphis and Shelby County.

In the 1950s, a local artist envisioned a trio of them—smaller reproductions of the Giza complex—on the city’s Mississippi riverfront.

In the 1970s, a group of local business leaders conjured a plan for a golden pyramid on the bluffs outside of

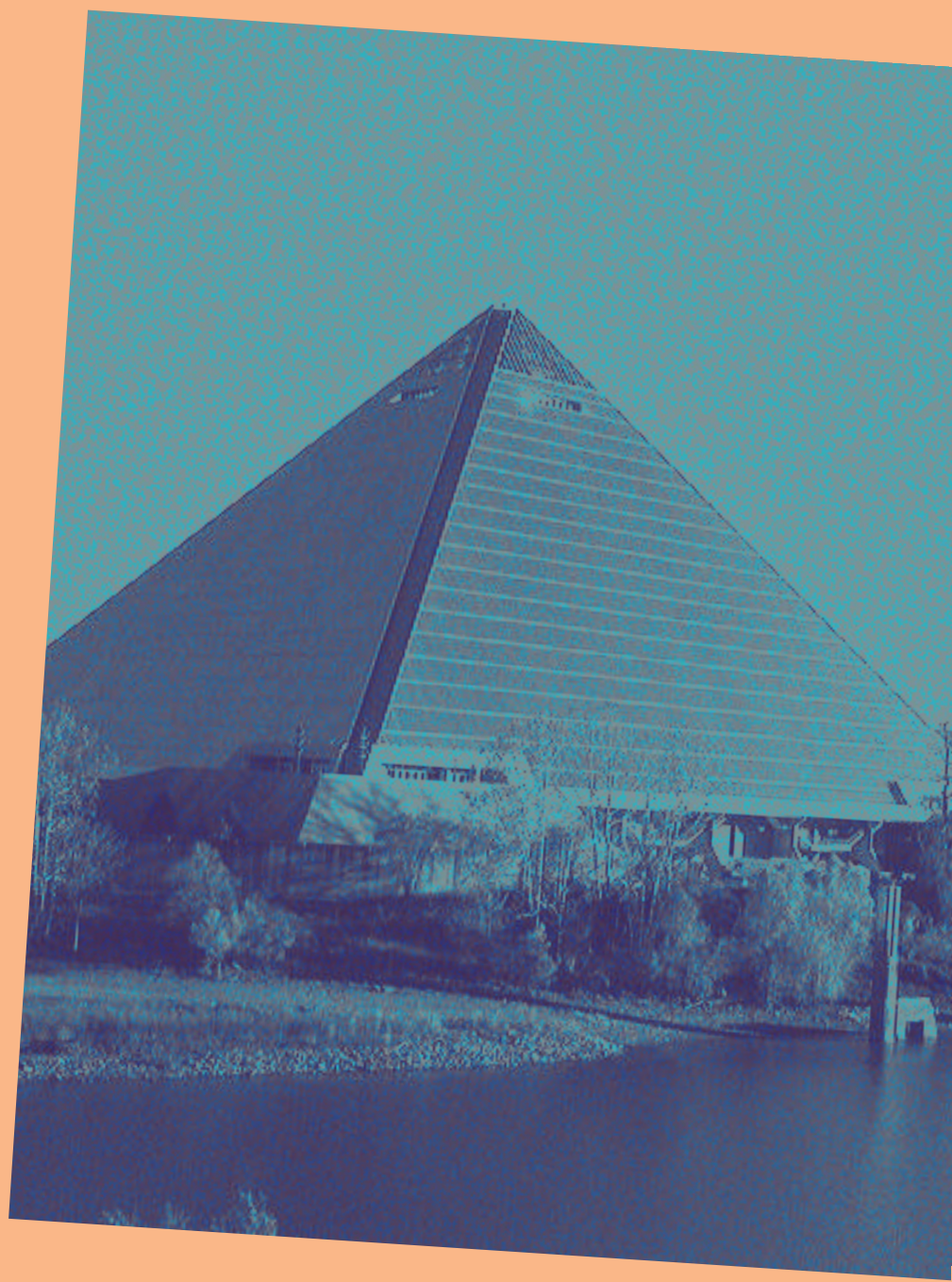
town.

It was not until the 1980s, that the idea found willing investors

It took **four decades** and several iterations before finally being constructed in .



It is a towering structure of steel and concrete that stands 98 meters (321 feet) tall and has a base that's 180 meters (591 feet) long. It cost 65 million dollars to build.





The Everchanging Purpose

The purpose of the Memphis pyramid was to house a 20,000 seat sports arena and concert hall.

However, the arena fell short of expectations.

There were plans for the pyramid to be the home of the Memphis Grizzlies. It was not suited to NBA standards and it would have cost less to build another building than it was to retrofit. The FedEx Forum now serves as the stadium for the basketball team, leaving for the Pyramid to find another purpose.

There were also plans for a shortwave radio station, , an outdoor elevator called the “inclinor” along the side of the building, a Hard Rock Cafe, a music museum, and a theme park on Mud Island, etc.

The arena did held concerts over the years, some of which were performed by well-known musicians.

Its last concert was held in February 2007 when Bob Seger performed.

Eight years passed before the arena saw use again.



Fun Fact: the Memphis Pyramid is considered the 10th tallest pyramid in the world.

To put it in perspective, the Giza Pyramid in Egypt is the 5th tallest pyramid.



It's now... a store?

In 2015, Bass Pro Shops brought the arena and turned into what is described a megastore. It is still being as a Bass Pro Shops to this day.