



Planning for Permanence: the Speeches of J.C. Nichols
[Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City](#)

JESSE CLYDE NICHOLS (1880-1950) Memoir

Genealogy

My father was born in 1847 near St. Clairsville, Ohio, and came to Johnson County immediately after the end of the Civil War in which he served as a private in the northern army. For the first winter in Johnson County he lived in a log cabin near Shawnee, Kansas.

My mother was born in 1853, as Joanna Jackson, on a farm near Marietta, Georgia. During the Civil War their farm was overrun by General Sherman on his famous march to the sea, and everything my grandparents owned was destroyed or confiscated. My Grandmother Jackson got a neighbor to care for her young son (Horace), and took my mother, then nine years old, and a younger sister, Emma, with her and served as a field nurse on the battle front in the Northern army, for nearly a year, while my Grandfather Jackson was serving as a captain in the Confederate forces. For more than a year my grandparents had no word from each other and neither knew what was happening to the other.

At the close of the war a group of the neighbors raised a fund to help them get to Iowa where they purchased a team and covered wagon and came to Johnson County. They purchased eighty acres of land from the Indians, ten miles northwest of Olathe, and settled down to farm.

When mother was fifteen years old she rode three miles each way (on horseback) every day to teach school in a one-room school. In those days it was the teacher's job to build her own fires, and take care of the school generally. For a four months' term she received a total of \$50.00 salary and used her first money to put the plaster on the walls of her parents' small crude home. The next year she used her salary to attend Baker University.

Though her early years were lived on a pioneer farm where the work was hard, nevertheless she developed into a most gracious, cultured lady and as a young woman she took an intensive part in the Ladies Literary Society of Olathe; in her church and many other social and educational things.

In 1873 my father and mother married and went to live with my father's parents on their farm which was about two miles distant from my Grandfather Jackson's home. Later my father bought out the interest of other members of his family in the home farm of 220 acres and operated it on shares (except for two years when we lived there) until his death in 1916.

Soon after my parents were married father became the manager of the Grange Store in Olathe, and we moved to that town. His salary was about \$1,000 a year, and Mother also clerked in the store, and took in boarders to help the family finances. Father held this position in the Grange Store for about thirty years, resigning in 1910 when he was elected on the Democratic ticket for county treasurer by the biggest majority ever polled up to that time by a candidate for public office in that county.

He was an ardent leader in the Populist Party days and a great believer in the rights of the common people. He was an avid reader of books on lives of great men and history.

During father's latter years he became half owner in a meat packing house in Olathe, known as Ostrander & Nichols, and their hams and sausage became quite famous over a sizeable area.

How father and mother ever accumulated some \$50,000.00 ... reared my sister and me comfortably, and sent my sister to college (as well as helping me)...I have never been able to understand even though I knew so well their frugal living habits, and the many ways in which mother helped.

My only sister, Maude, was a Kappa Kappa Gamma at Kansas University and president of her sorority. After graduation she taught in the Olathe High School, and later married William A. Mitchell, editor of the leading Republican paper in Olathe, and who later owned and perfected the dominant newspaper in Columbus, Kansas. They had one son, Ansel Nichols Mitchell, who married Helen Woods (daughter of Robert P. Woods of Kansas City), and they have twin daughters...Jeanne and Joanna; and two other daughters, Helen and Margaret. Ansel later became superintendent of construction of our company.

My wife, Jessie Eleanor, was the daughter of Manuel George Miller of Olathe, Kansas. Mr. Miller was born in Branch County, Michigan on a farm near a town called Kinderhook. (His father was born in Virginia on a farm, and his mother near Gettysburg. They were married in Cumberland, Maryland.) When only sixteen years of age Mr. Miller ran away from home and joined the Union army.

After the Civil War Mr. Miller came to St. Mary's, Kansas and worked as foreman on a railroad construction gang, and later became superintendent. In the early seventies he came to Olathe and started a general grocery and bakery store. Later he organized one of the first banks in Johnson County, Kansas...Bank of Olathe...which he ran for many years.

When he first came to Olathe he began acquiring farm land and eventually was one of the largest farm owners in the county, and he continued throughout his lifetime to maintain a deep interest in development of better farming and raising of livestock. He also raised some fine racing horses.

He became owner of the Olathe Telephone Company and expanded his lines out into the county.

Mr. Miller took an ardent interest in helping young people, and started many of them in business, which resulted, as a matter of fact, in his loss of a good deal of money which he lent to some of these young men.

At one time Mr. Miller ran for Congress, but was defeated by a small margin.

After Mr. Miller had been in Kansas some two years, he returned to Indiana and married Mary Eleanor Phenicie, daughter of David Phenicie, who was born in 1799 in Virginia where he taught school, and later went to Ohio, and then to Indiana near the Michigan line. His wife was born in 1803 in Maryland.

After their marriage they made their home in Kansas, but later Mrs. Miller, who suffered with asthma, found it necessary to live in San Diego, California. The two Miller daughters, Jessie Eleanor and Mona Louise, lived with their mother in California and Mr. Miller made frequent trips out there.

Though Mr. Miller had only a small country school education, he was an avid reader, and built up a fine library and became well informed on a vast field of subjects. He was a forward thinker of daring and vision, and even in those pioneer days he was deeply interested in science, health, and new things of all sorts.

Through all the years that he lived there he took a keen interest in the upbuilding of Olathe, his adopted town, and he promoted the first paved streets program against great opposition. He was so progressive that he made many enemies, but he never lost his courage to fight for the betterment of his town and county.

I remember his telling frequently that he could have bought a large part of the West Bottoms in Kansas City where the old Union Station stood, for only \$800 when he first came to Kansas, but he never regretted that he went on to Olathe.

Mr. and Mrs. Miller had the first bathroom and furnace ever installed in a home in Olathe, and they were among the first families to have electric lights and a telephone in their home.

Mr. Miller died in 1909 at sixty-four years of age while climbing Eagle Mountain in Estes Park, Colorado.

Jessie Eleanor Miller, who later became my wife, was born in 1879 in Olathe, and her sister Mona Louise Miller, was born in 1881. Both girls attended Vail-Deane Preparatory School in St. Elizabeth, New Jersey, and later both graduated at Vassar College. Louise also attended Kansas University for one year where she was a Kappa Kappa Gamma.

After graduation Jessie and Louise took an active part in social, church, and literary activities in Olathe, and they both took a keen interest in their father's farm. Jessie worked in her father's bank after her mother's death in 1903 at the age of fifty-nine.

Louise married John M. Kane, who had been a roommate and fraternity brother of mine at K.U. They met when he visited me in Olathe.

John came from Greensburg, Kansas, the son of fine parents...farmer and raiser of livestock. He taught school and did other jobs to earn his way through school, and ultimately became a successful lawyer in Kansas City, Missouri. Later he went to Dewey, Oklahoma and finally to Bartlesville, where he was chief counsel and executive vice-president of the Phillips Petroleum Company. He contributed in a very constructive manner to the upbuilding of that company into one of the leading oil companies in America. In addition he became a great power in the state of Oklahoma as head of the

State Bar Association; head of State Educational Board, and took active lead in a multitude of civic and public causes.

John and Louise have two sons (having lost one boy); John Miller Kane and Richard Kane.

Jessie Eleanor Miller and I were married in 1905, and we have three children ... Eleanor, Miller and Jesse Clyde, Jr.

Eleanor married Earl Wilson Allen of Lawrence, Kansas, and they have two daughters...Susanne Eleanor and Mary Louise.

Miller married Catherine Caldwell, daughter of a prominent Kansas City lawyer, and they have three daughters...Kay, Nancy, and Ann.

Clyde, Jr., married Martha Dodge of Salina, Kansas, and they have two sons...Jesse Clyde, III, and Wayne Dodge; and two daughters...Martha Blair and Jessie Eleanor.

I was born in Olathe, Kansas in 1880 and later lived with my parents on our farm out from town for about a year. When I was six years old I walked a mile on a dirt road to and from school every day.

Between the ages of eight and eleven I worked before and after school, and during certain summers, in Olathe gathering up cows (astride 'Old Fan', our buggy horse) from various barns and driving them daily in the morning about a mile and a half to pasture, and returning them in the evening. For this job I received 50¢ per cow per month, and one summer my herd became forty-three cows. Also, during this time it was my job to milk our own cow and deliver milk for sale to neighbors. I kept this up for many years.

At that time there was a tough "east end gang" of kids in Olathe, headed by a boy nicknamed "Bulldog," who used to let my cows out to stray every place, making it necessary for me to do considerable extra work to gather them up. Finally I got so mad at this that I organized a "West End Gang" and we licked Hell out of the "East End Gang" which resulted in a broken leg for one of the boys, but thereafter they let my cows alone!

When I was about eight I went to work on Saturdays in the Grange Store, from seven in the morning until ten at night (when I could get some other boy to take over the herding of my cows) for twenty-five cents a day. But, when I began leading in sales they raised my pay to \$1.00 a day! And, later to \$5.00 a day on Fourth of July, etc.

Of course, I was pretty raw and green, and the older clerks amused themselves by playing all sorts of tricks on me. For instance, they would rib up a customer to ask for such crazy things as "white lamp black"; "left-hand monkey wrenches"; "jugs open at both ends," etc., and I, unwilling to seem uninformed, would search diligently for these impossible things.

Once they had a customer ask me for some "nice swiney canute." I very politely told the customer we had it in stock and started to look for it. All the other clerks stood around and watched my diligent search, and for years thereafter they called me "Swiney." Even my high school friends took this up.

On one occasion they nailed down incoming boxes, and stood around and watched me struggle to put them on my truck.

These damned 'friendly' clerks even spread sawdust over some sorghum which they put in front of the spigot of the sorghum barrel, and got a huge laugh out of it when I knelt down to fill a customer's can and got up all covered with sawdust and molasses.

Perhaps all of this taught me a valuable lesson on how to take it and go on smiling...but also to look twice before you act!

For a time when I was thirteen I worked as dishwasher in a restaurant, and later clerked in a hardware store, and in a dry goods and clothing store.

One vacation I worked in a bakery from four in the morning in the bakeshop, and then drove a retail bakery wagon until one in the afternoon selling bakery good to housewives, and while I drove my wagon I was constantly ringing a bell. At least I learned good bread, and how much more money you can make selling luxury items such as cakes, cookies, etc.

For two summers I worked on farms at fifty cents a day plus board, and when I reached the ripe age of fourteen they raised me to seventy-five cents a day. Here again I became the target for all kinds of practical jokes. The other farmhands rigged up an arrangement by which they pulled a rope while we slept in the haymow so that it sounded like an intruder walking below, and then they would tell me it was robbers, and disappear and leave me alone quaking with fear.

As long as I live I'll never forget one day on the farm. After eating our noonday meal out in the field, we used to lie down under the wagon for a nap while the horses finished eating. These quick-witted farmhands had killed a large rattle snake, and they coiled it up so that it would look alive and placed it near where I was asleep. Suddenly they all yelled "rattlesnake." I turned over to look and there was the snake about two feet from my face. I jumped to my feet and ran across eighty acres of farmland before I stopped! This story became a legend in that part of the country. (Of course, in my later life, many times since...particularly in Washington...I have met circumstances just as bad as this coiled rattlesnake, but at least I had learned not to run until I knew from what I was running!)

We used to walk a mile after dinner and milking to a nearby pond to swim and the jovial farmhands frequently hid all my clothes so that I was forced to return to the hayloft stark naked. I was the small town boy...a natural target for the know-it-all gang of hayseeds.

But I had one friend among the farmhands...a colored boy by the name of George Washington, who tried to shield me from some of the unkind pranks, and ever since I have had a kindly feeling toward the Negro race.

Then there was the time I quit a good job in town and went to work on a farm. It rained for a whole week and my farmer employer objected to give me free board while waiting for the rain to stop! "Perhaps the laborer does have some rights."

When I was fifteen I worked part of one vacation at \$3.00 a day setting up grain binding machines for farmers...often working all night to meet the urgent mood of the farmers. My co-worker one night got drunk about three A.M., but for some mysterious

reason other than my mechanical ability, the machine was ready to cut the wheat by sun-up.

When I was sixteen and seventeen I worked during vacations as a huckster. I bought an old team (one horse blind), one big horse and one little fellow, and a second-hand wagon, and organized a route to buy up chickens, butter, eggs, apples, potatoes, etc., from farmers and hauled them to Kansas City, Missouri (twenty-five miles from Olathe) where I sold them to grocery stores and restaurants. Then in Kansas City I bought oranges, lemons, bananas, etc., at wholesale and sold them on my return trip to stores throughout the country.

One time when they were having a July Fourth celebration at DeSoto, Kansas I bought up twenty bunches of bananas in Kansas City cheap because they were over-ripe because I thought with the big crowd at the celebration I could sell them quickly. Unfortunately for me, however, it turned very hot and then rained and the expected crowd did not materialize so that I had to sell my spoiled bananas for almost nothing for hog feed! This taught me that the cheapest way is not always the best.

My huckster route covered about eighty-five miles, including nine small towns, and I tried to cover it twice a week, sometimes sleeping on the ground under my wagon and cooking my meals over a campfire. I made from \$5.00 to \$7.50 a day and with my earnings that first summer helped to put the first electric wiring and central heating plant in my parents' home.

Mother would sometimes get up at three in the morning to cook my breakfast for me when I was starting on a long huckster trip. I tried to average four miles an hour, but when the roads were muddy, I could make only about two miles an hour, frequently even getting out and walking up hills to lighten the load for the horses.

The first day I started the huckster route I very proudly drove in the alley back of the Grange store with my ill-assorted team and wagon, and found my old grocery clerk friends still in a playful mood, and they hung signs on my wagon and team such as "Low prices for rotten eggs;" "Foul smelling butter at low prices," "Scrawny chickens at bargain prices," etc.

Also, there was the day in Kansas City when a fire engine frightened my horses at 18th and Walnut and my wagon was upset and chickens, butter and eggs splattered over the street. Undaunted, I worked all day reclaiming my wares as well as I could (which by this time warranted the sarcastic signs my grocery clerk friends had tacked on my wagon); and sold it all in the North End at a big loss.

I had to carry a lot of cash most of the time, and took along a large revolver which I doubt very much I should have had the courage to shoot had the occasion arisen.

All of the foregoing is why George Sessions Perry, in his story in the August number of *The Saturday Evening Post* (1945), called me a peddler.

The fact of the matter is that during this time my parents had become comparatively prosperous and there was no real need for my working so hard, but from my earliest childhood I had been deeply impressed by the manner in which my parents and grandparents worked hard, and I was fired by a keen desire to do my full part at all times.

I Go To School

During my high school days in Olathe I organized our first debating team and also the first football team, and got up the first high school yell. Our debating team settled a lot of world questions...all the wrong way!

In fact, as valedictorian of my graduating class in 1897 my oration was on the subject "Is Peace a Dream?" I am sorry to say that I set forth vigorously all the reasons why peace was attainable. As a matter of fact, while I was in the midst of a ringing peroration on the stage of the packed Olathe Opera House, all the lights went out and I had to continue my speech in the dark...perhaps the good light company knew how crazy my predictions were! My Olathe friends still remind me of this, and considering that since that time we have been through the Spanish American War and two world conflicts, they have some basis for their remarks! Undoubtedly the cannons I predicted would be beaten into plowshares have since been used in modern instruments of war...atomic bombs, etc.

I forgot to mention that when I graduated from high school it was with the highest grades that had ever been made by any pupil in that school up until that time. My grades averaged 99.2. I have often wondered where that other eight tenths of a percent got away from me...unless it was while I was making love to my future wife. Two older farm boys, Bartlett and Hall, both former school teachers were in my class. They did not run a "cow route"; did out work in stores on Saturday; did not spoon at night with girls ...did nothing but study. I knew my competition and by the Gods, it damned near killed me to lick their grades!

This just shows what stimulation you can get from honest-to-God competition, and I don't think they even took time off to go to Sunday School, while, believe it or not, I was a teacher in a Presbyterian Sunday School. (God help my pupils!)

During Christmas holidays one year I worked in a local meat packing house, and my job was to cut the fat from hog guts! I sometimes wonder how I over ate another piece of pork!

At seventeen I got an agency to sell dishwashing machines which proved a failure after about two weeks. Even my mother, who usually encouraged me in my money-making schemes, refused to use the thing! This brought home to me the fact that it is wise to be sure your wares are sound.

I Go To College

After graduation from high school I came to Kansas City and spent a year running a wholesale meat market at 1611 Grand Avenue where I slept behind a canvas curtain which I had strung across one corner. The rent was \$35.00 a month for a space forty by a hundred twenty-five [feet]. I had a team of mules to deliver the meat, and before the year was over I had five teams delivering meat all over Kansas City. I came to know the back entrance of every important restaurant and hotel in Kansas City, but when I finally added Fred Harvey to my list of customers I felt I had reached the top in the meat selling business!

In those days I met a six o'clock train from Olathe every evening at the old Union Station in the west bottoms, hauled my meat to 1611 Grand and worked until ten or

eleven at night putting up orders for early morning delivery the next day. During that year I made enough money to start college.

At eighteen in the fall of 1898 I entered Kansas University. During my four years there I worked as a correspondent for the *Kansas City Star*; maintained a wholesale meat route; was steward at the Beta Theta Pi fraternity (with free board) and did many other things to help pay my expenses.

(Let me state again that my parents were able and willing to send me to school, and did give me some assistance, and the only reason I worked so diligently was because I enjoyed work, and liked the feeling of independence that I got from earning my own money.)

While I acted as steward of the Beta house I got the dining-room out of debt which had been hanging over them for many years. Also, I took over management of the Athletic Association and got that group out of debt for the first time in nine years.

We arranged that the members of the baseball team were nearly all Betas and lived at the Beta House, several of them working their way through school as waiters. In fact, I'm not sure but that we had more waiters than paying Betas! Of course, this meant cutting down on the food, but we all wanted a winning team and the other men were willing to cooperate. Of course, the other fraternities yelled "favoritism," but we won the games and in the long run that was what everyone wanted, so everybody was happy. (One year I played third baseman myself...always hoping a ball would never come my way!)

Once our baseball team went on its first long thousand mile tour...as far away as Chicago. We had a good team of players and won six games out of ten, and it was quite a journey. (By keeping the boys dodging around through the train, we managed to keep the conductor confused, and thereby got one fellow through free...I must admit I am a little ashamed of this, but the toilet came in mighty handy in this maneuver.)

I can honestly say that I never gave a single dollar to get a good player to come to Kansas University, though I don't deny I helped many a boy to find ways to earn his way through school, and am glad to say that many of them have become our most important alumni.

We all knew that the other schools in our area were importing and paying good baseball and football players. I called a conference of all the schools, and they all claimed to be innocent. I got them to sign a written agreement as to proselytizing good men, but they proceeded to violate the agreement.

One great pitcher, Amy Morgan, coats to my mind. I had him enrolled for higher education under Professor Blake (although he told Blake, "ain't had much education—quit school at the sixth grade") but when the team was in Galesburg, Illinois, I got a telegram from Chancellor Snow not to play Morgan because Baker University had filed a protest. I had to put him out and we lost the game. Later Baker University put him on their team!

Roy Roberts, now the nationally known president and editor of the *Kansas City Star*, was always at the entrance gate to get free admission by carrying baseball bats and football stuff!

Anyway, during the years I was leading athletics at Kansas University, we developed a 'never defeated football team'; ranked high in track; and had baseball teams that won a large majority of their games, and no one could have fought harder than I did for clean athletics when I was up against a lot of rotten practices in the schools throughout our conference.

Dear old Professor Green, head of the Kansas University Law School, was always loyal to me, as was also Professor Adams of European History where I was enrolled in his classes. He did not even make me take an examination, but gave me an "I"...I suppose because I had given the school a winning baseball, football and track team...but, of course, he must have assumed that I was a 'brilliant student'!

I organized a successful statewide campaign for an appeal to the State Legislature for more financial support for the university.

Vacations

Between Freshman and Sophomore years I worked loading potatoes into railroad cars at \$1.50 a car in the Kaw Valley. This was hard work, so I got my head to work and figured out how to use a small hand truck to handle the heavy sacks of potatoes and was soon able to make \$10.00 a day, which precipitated a strike among the potato growers because I was earning so much money...however, they came across.

Between Sophomore and Junior years I sold large McCauley two-faced maps of the world and United States in Utah and Wyoming. During this trek I often slept in barns and haystacks, or any other place that happened to be handy. I found the Mormon people very fine citizens, and liberal map buyers.

In a saloon in Wyoming one night I stood for twenty minutes on a whiskey keg and sold nineteen maps at \$1.00 each.

One day in Cass River Valley between Salt Lake City and Ogden, I sold my five by seven foot maps to seventeen wives of one Mormon, all living on separate farms. All I had to do was to say that the other wives were buying them!

I took orders for these maps from a sample, and never lost a single sale on delivery. During that summer I sold more than a thousand maps and made 54¢ on each one of them, but I had rough going while I awaited delivery of maps. (One time when I was pretty hungry, I was fortunate enough to find a silver dollar on top of a telephone booth. This helped a lot!) I budgeted myself to fifty cents a day for food.

As a sales talk I insisted that no child should be reared without one of my maps on the wall where they could see it every day and add to their knowledge of world geography. Of course, considering the intervention of two world wars, I'm afraid my maps would be pretty well out of date today!

Later that summer I claimed I was twenty-one years of age and got appointed deputy United States Marshall and went after some Japs who were importing prostitutes to the United States. One time I took a train trip into Nevada where I hired four mule teams and drove fifty-five miles to a mining camp and handcuffed a Jap while he was still asleep...thank God he was asleep! I drove back with my prisoner and flagged a through

transcontinental train, showed my United States Marshall badge (got hell from the conductor) but got my prisoner in Salt Lake City three days before the expected time.

On one trip I took a desperate Jap to Seattle...all handcuffed and docile...but when the train stopped at a small wayside station the local Japs tried to take him away from me. Somehow my nerve came to my rescue (or perhaps it was my fear) and at the point of my two revolvers I put the raiders off the train and finally turned my prisoner over to the Washington state penitentiary.

Between Junior and Senior years a fellow student by the name of Clock, who was studying for the ministry, and I herded four cars of cattle on a freight train to Boston...thereby getting free transportation...and hired out on a cattle boat bound for Europe. On the boat we were kept below deck...slept on baled hay, and scrambled with the rest of the hands for food out of big pans on the floor. Unfortunately, I was terribly seasick a good part of the way and my friend Clock fed my 'cattle run' for me during that time.

Before we left Boston we paid \$15.00 each for Hanford bicycles and dead-headed them across in the cook's meatbox. Upon arrival in Britain we rode our bicycles to London and put them in a repair shop, which burned that night! Next day they gave us fine new bikes equipped with coaster brakes, headlights and a lot of up-to-date things that our Boston bikes had not had. We rode these bicycles through Belgium, Holland and into Germany carrying what few clothes we had with us on the bikes. We allowed ourselves a dollar a day for room and board...wherever we thought we could get away with it we used a sympathy gag and got free room and board! In Cologne, Germany we sold our bikes for \$60.00 each.

Then we went up the Rhine by boat...working part of our way...toured Switzerland on foot with knapsacks on our backs and when we got hungry (which was almost every day) my pal, Wilkie Clock, who was a good singer, would sing in the street and I would take up a collection. In Switzerland we climbed Mount Rigi and then claimed we were expert guides, and made good money for a few days as guides and then were on our way again.

When we got to Paris we saw a lot of "Rue" life which my religious pal insisted he did not want to see (even threatened to part our ways); and then we came home on immigration tickets in steerage to Montreal. After purchasing my ticket to Kansas City I had eighty-five cents left...lived on apples and ginger snaps for three days, and landed in Kansas City with six cents in my pocket. Fortunately, I met a friend in the Union Station to whom I was able to sell my old worn out sweater for fifty-nine cents (cut price) which, plus the six cents, paid my fare to Olathe. I arrived home with nothing much but a greatly prized Alpine stock, and the rather forlorn looking clothes on my back, and the memory of a wonderful trip. When I sold the story of the trip to the *Olathe Mirror* for \$25.00 I thought I had struck it rich!

This three months' trip made a lasting impression on me...I was struck most forcibly with the imposing plans, and permanent character of the cities and the buildings, and I

believe it was then that the spark was struck that ultimately brought the Country Club District into being.

I Go To Harvard

In my senior year at Kansas University I was elected president of our class, and I graduated with grades equal to any previous records in the school up to that time. I was awarded honorary membership in the Phi Beta Kappa and Beta Gamma Sigma fraternities...both given on scholarship rating. I also won a scholarship to Harvard. I graduated in 1902 and since I was planning to go to Harvard in the fall I set out during the summer to earn what money I would need. Luckily for me, I found an opportunity to sell stock in a mine in Idaho, and in three months I made \$500.00...though I've always felt a little guilty about it because the mine was a flop!

That fall I entered Harvard, and with my mining stock earnings and some commissions I earned as a newspaper correspondent, I came out at the end of the year only \$50.00 in debt and even made some trips through the year to the White Mountains, through New York state, etc.

I Go into Business

During that year in Harvard I found myself becoming interested (as a result of one course I took in economics) in colonization of new areas in the United States and Mexico. After I finished Harvard in 1903 I wasted almost a year in Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, New Mexico and Arizona, trying to interest men with money to finance me in buying up large tracts of land for colonization. (Sometimes I wonder if seed for the love of Spanish and Mexican architecture was not sown in my heart during that year.)

Of course, I had no important financial contacts, and my farmer friends whom I took down there all said that Kansas and Missouri farms looked better to them. In fact, my prospective banker father-in-law went with me on a trip down there and I damned nearly lost his consent to marry his daughter! One day he told her he thought I was "queer". Of course, this whole scheme was a flop, but I did talk a lot of railroad presidents into giving me free transportation!

One day I sat in a Ft. Worth hotel...somewhat discouraged...and I flipped a coin to see whether I should return home...heads I'd go home, tails I'd keep hitting the ball...it came up tails...so I came home! I was completely broke, and pretty heavily in debt. I felt licked financially and almost mentally, and in Olathe I kept to side streets because I was embarrassed to see my friends. I was convinced that I was a complete failure and there was no future for me whatever.

(As fate would have it, some of the land I was considering trying to finance in Texas has since become immensely valuable for oil and gas! Who knows, perhaps if I'd followed my hunch when the nickel came up tails, things might have been different for many people?)

However, I got my courage back and called on two old Kansas University Beta friends...F.E. and W.T. Reed, lawyers in Kansas City, and they told me of a tract of land in Kansas City, Kansas which had to be sold for cash in forced sale by a bankrupt company, and upon which they thought it would be practical to build small houses. I knew nothing whatever about building houses of any kind, but it presented a challenge to

me so I went back to Olathe and organized a syndicate under the name of Reed Brothers & Nichols among my old farmer friends, and for \$22,500.00 bought the tract of land in Kansas City, Kansas. It is gratifying to me even yet to recall that during that dark period my future father-in-law backed me up, and at that time it meant a lot to me, because I had such tremendous admiration and respect for him personally and as a business man.

In Kansas City, Kansas I rented space for a desk at the rate of \$5.00 a month, back of the prescription counter of a drugstore at 13th and Chelsea Park carline, and after a good deal of thought and figuring, decided I could afford to pay an extra dollar a month for the use of his telephone. Then I started to build small homes on lots twenty-five to thirty-three and a third feet wide, and sold them for \$800.00 to \$1,000.00. Of course, there were no modern facilities in these houses, and there were no street improvements, but for some reason they went over big.

During those days I slept on a short sofa in a little parlor in the home of my head carpenter (or a good part of the time on the floor); got up at 5:30 A.M. to look after my horse, and was on the building job at 7 A.M. and worked all day with the building crews. When they quit at 6 P.M. I became the salesman, and from 7 P.M. until 10 P.M. I sold houses.

In 1903 there had been a most disastrous flood in the lowlands of Kansas City, Kansas...so we named our properties "The Highlands" and had some circulars printed setting forth the wonderful advantages of our houses. As destitute families left their flooded houses with their few belongings, we handed out these circulars. I have always felt a little ashamed of this.

At the end of the first year we returned all of the investment to the farmers in the syndicate, and later paid them a sixty-five percent profit. But, as I look back over that year, it was one of the hardest of my life because I was ridden by the obsession of another failure, and I was so determined that that should not happen that I wouldn't stop work even for meals, sleep or pleasure. The Reed brothers stayed with me, and I owe much of my final success in this venture to their fine counsel and advice.

I shall always remember how inordinately proud I was of our first letterheads..."Reed-Nichols & Company!" It looked mighty ambitious to me even though we were selling many of our vacant lots for only one dollar down and a dollar a week.

About the end of the first year a keen-eyed, alert young man of nineteen who appeared to be unusually bright and willing, and with a good personality applied for a job. He was John C. Taylor of Emporia, Kansas and he later became a dominant factor in the development of the Country Club District, and president of the J.C. Nichols Company. The Reeds felt he was seriously lacking in experience, but there was a quality about his eagerness and friendliness that appealed to me at once, and so we took him on. It really was one of the luckiest breaks I ever had!

I shall never forget John's dismay when we sold out at wholesale a tract of land of five acres in Kansas City, Kansas upon which we had built an office and were ready to go ahead building houses. We had given this tract the catch name of "California Park," but when we had the chance to turn it all at once we did so. John was sure that was the end of all of us.

We Start the Country Club District

In the spring of 1905, to Taylor's great joy, the Reeds and I bought a ten acre tract at 51st and Grand...one block south of the then city limits of Kansas City, Missouri...for \$800.00 an acre, and thus began the Country Club District!

We worried a lot because we found ourselves spending so much of our time street grading with scrapers, and building wooden sidewalks from old lumber out of an old barn at about 26th and Grand Avenue which was given to us free for razing it and hauling it away. Taylor and I tore the barn down with our own hands and built two and a half foot sidewalks with the lumber. These were the first wonderful improvements in the Country Club District!

We named our first two subdivisions "Rockhill Park" and "Rockhill Place" and went out at whatever odd hours we could spare from our street and sidewalk building to sell lots.

Later Peter Larson, foreman for William Rockhill Nelson kindly lent us equipment to pave our streets, and we even put in curbs which were practically unknown at that time in outlying subdivisions in Kansas City. Then soon we were able to change to concrete sidewalks and get rid of the narrow board walks.

We had to construct several bridges over the stream in the Brookside valley extending through the east part of our land and these were built entirely out of wood at a very low cost. Of course, in those days we did not have big heavy trucks and these wooden bridges were all right, but eventually they had to be replaced with concrete structures, but by that time our property had been taken into the city and these large culverts were built by the city.

About that time we found that to get rid of a foul smelling hog feeding lot, a brick kiln, some undesirable squatters, and a Negro amusement park, and make our property more saleable, we had to buy the adjoining land. Again I went to my old farmer friends around Olathe (this time with a little more assurance) and organized a syndicate to buy a nearby twenty-five acres and this also proved a profitable venture for my friends.

(I forgot to mention that in Rockhill Park there was a dairy with more than a hundred cows and we had to wait many months to get the dairyman off of the property. Also, there were some old ramshackle buildings...cider mill...stone quarry, etc., along the carline that took us a long time to get rid of.)

About that time, or perhaps a little earlier, Frank R. Grant joined us, and he later became vice-president of the company; then David M. Kennard, who became director of sales; the late Max T. Stone who became secretary; the late Walter Basinger, who became sales manager of the growing company; George W. Tourtellot who became head of our business properties department, and through the years many others have become part of the organization and have remained to build a great company and a great residential section.

I am inordinately proud of the long association of these men, and wish to give them every possible credit for the splendid part they played in the final building of the Country Club District and all that it means to Kansas City. Without their loyal cooperation, hard

work, and heart-felt interest and belief in the ultimate goal toward which we strove, it could never have been done.

Inasmuch as we were operating beyond the city limits, and in a direction entirely opposite to the expected growth of Kansas City, there were no streets (except those we built ourselves), no city water, no gas, no telephones, electricity, or transportation. Even the stores would not deliver goods to our area.

We Make Mistakes

One of our early mistakes was acquiring land in Clay County, Missouri for future residential development. We learned to our sorrow that it was much wiser to concentrate our efforts.

We bought our first tract of some 230 acres, known as the Wigglesworth farm, in 1905 and listed it proudly on our books as "Clay County Farm No. 1." It was rumored at that time that there was going to be a highway bridge built over the Missouri River to take the place of the ferry which had operated since Civil War days.

Later we acquired two or three additional farms, but soon found that growth in Clay County was slow and there was unlimited area into which it could spread, and we decided we had made a mistake in buying this land and started selling it off in large tracts. In fact, our total sale price, if we were to have counted all carrying charges on the land the years we carried it with little income, represented quite a loss.

In the meantime we were acquiring more land in the Country Club District and our activities were increasing, and it was forcibly brought home to us that we could not scatter our operations, and since that time we have stuck to the Country Club District and adjacent lands.

Also, without having sufficient information on which to base our purchases, we made a good many mistakes in purchase of outlying intersections anticipating location of future highways. So, we ended up with a good many locations that have proved largely worthless. However, as a whole out of some seventy-five to a hundred such outlying intersections, even extending into nearby cities as far away as Lexington, Missouri, Tonganoxie, Kansas, etc., and in the long run it proved a profitable operation for us.

I Get Married

In 1905 I went to Olathe to marry Jessie Eleanor Miller, and brought her to Kansas City where we moved into the third home we had built in Bismark Place at 5030 Walnut. (The first home we built for our own was sold before we could move into it!) We lived there for more than a year with no city conveniences, and Mrs. Nichols was a loyal, good sport, and true helpmate, and all through the years I have depended more and more on her excellent judgment in many things. She had undoubtedly inherited much of her father's good business ability. She never failed me, and though she often disagreed with me, I found that she had a sound, practical approach to questions on which I asked her advice. My associates, too, feel that her help through the years has been a great factor in our success.

During the years we lived at 5030 Walnut we carried our water from a spring about a quarter of a mile distant; were more than a mile from the nearest streetcar, and there were

no graded or paved streets or sidewalks. Soon we were able to have the luxury of a telephone, but it was more than a year before we had gas, water, sewers and electricity. Mrs. Nichols's beautiful trousseau shoes were soon ruined by the mud, but her wonderful sense of humor came to her rescue, and she continued to carry on cheerfully and willingly. By this time even her banker father had concluded he wasn't going to have to support us.

We had a cow, but the boy who was supposed to milk her frequently failed to show up, so that was another chore I had to take on pretty often. Of course, we had horses and buggies, which we had to keep in a barn at 47th and Troost which was a mile and a half away. I often wonder how Mrs. Nichols's confidence in me withstood the strain of those hectic days.

We Continue to Expand

Almost from the start our sale of lots was good. We met our prospects with horses and buggies at the end of the Rockhill carline at 47th street which was a mile away, and it was quite a surprise to us when people bought lots even with no assurance as to when utilities or street improvements might be provided. Our long time friend, W.T. Grant, head of the Business Men's Assurance Company, was one of our first 'victims', and we are grateful that he still remains one of our very best friends.

Some of our facetious competitors cracked that our lots were "like cemetery lots which people might buy, but had no wish to use."

About this time, the late William Rockhill Nelson, that bluff, hearty owner and editor of the *Kansas City Star* began to take an interest in our efforts and to my great surprise sent for me. Our properties were just southwest of Oak Hall, his luxurious home, and the Rockhill area of homes he was building at that time. He was an ardent believer in better residential areas, and better planned cities. He encouraged me greatly by telling me that anything would be better than the use of the land made by the pre-Civil War owners.

However, much to my dismay, we nearly lost his friendship when he learned that we had had the audacity to name our second subdivision "Rockhill Park." We had a hard time convincing him that we had not known that "Rockhill" was his middle name. It is with great gratitude that I record here that his friendship for us continued until his death, and we were also able to keep the friendship of Mrs. Nelson, and their daughter, Laura, who later became Mrs. Irwin Kirkwood and whose friendship we also enjoyed until their death.

Of course, everyone knows that Mr. Nelson and his family left their entire fortune for the establishment of a great art gallery in Kansas City. A handsome monumental type of building was later built on the site of their beautiful home at 46th and Rockhill Road, and named the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art. It is set in a magnificent park, and is a worthy neighbor to the Country Club District.

Mr. Nelson left \$11,000,000 toward the purchase of objects of art for this gallery, and in 1926 I was named a trustee (later became chairman) of this fund and given the job of purchasing works of art, as well as handling the investment of the funds, etc.

After Mr. Nelson's death we found his successor, as one of the owners of the *Star*, George Longan, a staunch friend who recognized what we were trying to do to build a fine residential section, and he was helpful to us in many ways.

I Become a Bank Director

About this time W.T. Kemper, President of the Commerce Trust Company, who was also from Kansas, for some unknown reason took a liking to us, and because he had confidence in the ultimate success of our work, named me, at twenty-six years of age, a director of his bank. I was ten years younger than any other bank director in Kansas City. Later I learned that some of his other directors were quite indignant about his putting a young 'green' boy from the country, with so little financial means, on his board. I have always taken great pride in being a member of this board of this great bank, and cannot help but recall that some of the directors who protested my being put on the board, later became financially involved. Today I am the oldest director, in point of service, on the board, and have always taken great pleasure in working with Jim Kemper. Of course, our stock holdings in the bank have always been very profitable.

From our own standpoint, the best part of this directorship was the fact that it enabled us to borrow from a big bank, and it was always a great satisfaction that W.T. (and later his successors, Walter McLucas and Jim Kemper) never turned us down. As a matter of fact the Commerce gave us a line of credit up to \$800,000.00 without collateral and this gave us great moral and financial support over our lean periods. Of course, this might have been considered poor banking on their part, but apparently they believed in us.

Later it afforded us much satisfaction to locate a branch of this bank in our Country Club Plaza shopping center, and which soon proved to be the biggest suburban bank in Kansas City.

Looking back over those early days I realize I was very sensitive and had a real inferiority complex which made it necessary for me to battle constantly to screw up my courage to sell groceries, clothing, mining stock, meat, maps, fruit or real estate, and it was only because I believed so sincerely in what I was doing that I was able to continue to force myself forward, against my own innate desires. Strange as it may seem I always used to have a feeling of relief when I called on a prospect and found him out! All my life I have had to fight this natural timidity and I certainly sympathize with a person who is selling anything. It takes real 'guts' and courage to be a good salesman.

During my time at Kansas University I became quite well acquainted with one of the regents of the university...Mr. Frank Grant Crowell. He was very nice to me and seemed to take an interest in me. Shortly after I came to Kansas City I met his business partner, Herbert F. Hall. These two men were associated in a prosperous grain business. Through them I met another grain man, Edwin W. Shields of the Simond-Shields-Lonsdale Grain Company. These three men were to have a great influence on my life.

Mr. Hall lived in northeast Kansas City and Mr. Shields near 31st and Forest. Both of these neighborhoods were at that time on the down-grade, and these two men were desirous of building fine new homes on large tracts of ground. Together they purchased about fifty acres of land lying between 51st and 53rd Streets, Oak to Holmes. Mr. Hall took something over fifteen acres for his home, and Mr. Shields took some ten acres for

his home. Upon this ground they built two of the finest and most beautiful homes ever built in Kansas City.

Upon Mr. Hall's death, his wife having pre-deceased him, he bequeathed his home and grounds, along with a large endowment fund, to Kansas City for establishment of a library. This library was later founded as a scientific one, and in honor of Mr. Hall's wife it was named the Linda S. Hall Scientific Library.

Our young company laid out their subdivision...put in street improvements, etc., and after all these years it is still a magnificent, imposing area of lovely homes with wide, rolling lawns, stately trees, and winding drives.

At that time there seemed to be some danger of coal yards, lumber yards, and other similar industry coming into the valley along Oak Street on the west and adjoining their land. Consequently, Mr. Hall, Mr. Shields and our company went together and acquired fifteen acres north of 51st Street, between Oak and what was then a railroad track, and now the Country Club streetcar line. Then Mr. Hall and Mr. Shields purchased some twelve acres of land between Oak and the railroad tracks between 51st and what later became 52nd Street, the pioneer entrance to our Country Club District leading off Oak Street.

I forgot to mention that in the early days there was a steam railroad known as the "Dodson Line" operating from the city of Westport south to Dodson...a distance of about eight miles. This railroad was started in the early eighties with the idea that it would ultimately be built clear through to the Gulf of Mexico. It never got beyond Dodson. It was used mostly for handling freight, but one passenger car was attached to the end of the freight train and was supposed to make two trips a day. It was very irregular, and we soon found it was of no value for passenger service to our ground.

This demonstrated to us the great need for regular streetcar transportation. Consequently, Mr. Taylor and I led a campaign to raise a bonus of some \$50,000 to offer to the Street Railways Company (now known as the Public Service Company), if they would acquire this railroad line to Dodson and give us regular streetcar service from 43rd and Main (where the line then ended) out to 51st Street. We succeeded in raising the money, and the Street Railways Company purchased the steam line, and then refused to accept our bonus because we had stipulated that they should cease hauling freight, which they did not want to do.

Very soon after that, however, we were able to get a good streetcar line and persuaded the railway company to call it "The Country Club Carline." It first ended at 51st Street, and for years we maintained our little sales office at the northwest corner of 51st and the carline right-of-way.

We Build a Shopping Center

Forty-two years ago we concluded that we should have a nearby shopping center for the people who were buying our lots and homes. So, we proceeded to build a group of buildings between the carline and Oak Street on the north side of 51st street which we named "The Colonial Shops." There were about eight rooms in this group, and for quite awhile we had some fine retail merchandising places...a restaurant, drugstore, filling

station, etc. However, when the streetcar line was extended south to 57th Street, and we moved our office out there, these shops faded out pretty rapidly.

Later the terminus of the carline was extended to 63rd Street, and our 63rd and Brookside shopping center was started. The streetcar now goes to 75th Street, but still bears the name "Country Club Carline."

We Extend Restriction

Our sales gradually increased, and Mr. Hall, who was already very friendly to us, advanced the money for us to buy another tract of land of some twenty acres north of 53rd Street, extending from the carline up to Main. We named this new area Rockhill Place. By that time we had sold out Bismark Place. In this area we had agreed to include no street improvements, and had put only ten year restrictions. Experience, however, soon taught us that ten years restrictions on residential property was of little value.

Subdivisions built up to any extent with a number of homes naturally create some business values and anyone who purchased a corner lot on a good street intersection, as soon as the restrictions expired immediately wished to put them to commercial use and thus establish much better sales value or income. Consequently, we changed our length of restrictions to twenty-five years, and as I shall describe later on, subsequently increased it in many areas to forty years.

E.S. Yeomans with Mrs. Yeomans owned 105 acres known as the old Simpson Homestead, between Main and Wornall Road, and 57th north to a point a few hundred feet north of 52nd Street. After many conferences with Mr. and Mrs. Yeomans, they turned this tract of ground over to us to develop on a fifteen percent commission basis. We were to look after subdivision of all this land, supervision of street improvements, and Mr. Yeomans advanced the money for such purposes. We were to pay all advertising expense, and sales commissions.

The only polo field in Kansas City was on this ground and I recall was operated in connection with the Kansas City Country Club, Kansas City's first country club which lay just to the west across Wornall Road from the Simpson farm. Of course, we aroused the ill-will of some polo players when Mr. Yeomans cancelled the lease with the polo crowd so we could proceed with the street improvements and sell lots in this new area.

We called this new subdivision "Countryside." Our sales quickly became very active, and we stepped up our average frontage to not less than seventy-five to a hundred feet where in the beginning we had gone pretty far when we had made our lot widths fifty to sixty feet after starting out with much narrower lots in Bismark Place, and here again we found it wise to place longer restrictions.

Even our twenty-five year restrictions were getting close to expiration through the years and we spent over \$50,000 in buying back lots where people would not agree to extending restrictions, but we finally did get the extension of restrictions in this area in order to protect it from injurious encroachments and set up self-perpetuating restrictions, which I shall describe later on.

When we started to grade Main Street, which was just a dirt road lying between the Countryside Addition and Rockhill Place and Rockhill Park, we ran across a lot of old graves. Those remains were moved to lots purchased in Union Cemetery, but later we got

into considerable difficulty with people who claimed to be heirs and tried to collect damages from us. As a matter of fact, I think we ran into one or two graves of the Simpson family (ancestors of the Yeomans) up near where the old country home used to stand, but we had no trouble with the Yeomans.

About that time the late Hugh C. Ward who owned several hundred acres from about 51st south to roughly 57th (which land had been in the family since before the Civil War) came to see us about handling the development of this property for him. The old homestead built by their father before the Civil War is still standing. It is of brick construction; excellent architecture and quite a large home. We decided to save the home, but finally convinced Mr. Ward that it would be best to raze a lot of barns, and sheds which had become landmarks in that whole rural area.

Hugh Ward was active in all our transactions, and left to us entirely the matter of restrictions, size of lots and blocks, installation of street improvements, etc. This enabled us to offer some tracts of two hundred feet frontage or more, and very quickly we were successful in bringing many of the wealthiest people of Kansas City into this area which we named "Sunset Hill."

We Employ a City Planner

George E. Kessler, probably the most eminent landscape architect and city planner of that period in the entire country, was employed to lay off our street plan, and we then determined on the policy of curved streets wherever possible, though this had been largely unknown in Kansas City prior to that time. There were many fine forest trees on this land and we made every effort to save them. Also, there were some picturesque ledges of rock, and a hilly interesting terrain, all of which were taken into consideration in all of our planning and platting. All of this resulted in a beautiful area of fine homes.

This brought us into additional streetcar transportation problems on the west side of our growing area, and we proceeded to negotiate for the extension of a carline which up to that time had ended at about 47th Street. We finally agreed to pay all of the cost of some \$60,000 to extend this carline to 56th Street in consideration of their operating the cars to this point and call it the "Sunset Hill" carline.

By that time the city limits had been extended to about 79th Street, which we had strongly urged...in fact, we took the leadership in the movement. George E. Kessler who was consultant for the Park Board at that time, strongly urged a parkway extension through the Ward holdings and out as far south as Gregory Boulevard. We had already succeeded in getting the city to condemn the land for Millcreek Parkway and this enabled a fine boulevard and parkway to be built from about 42nd Street south to Brush Creek and afforded a good connection to Broadway, already an important artery of travel to downtown through Penn Valley Park.

John Taylor, Frank Grant, Dave Kennard, E.W. Tanner and a few others of our staff had set up a corporation known as the J.C. Nichols Investment Company and this new company and Hugh Ward acquired additional land from 51st north to about 48th and then gave outright to Kansas City, Missouri some ninety acres of land for what is now Ward Parkway, leading from Wornall Road southwesterly to approximately Belleview, then

swinging on curved lines up the hill to 55th Street, and south to what is now Gregory Boulevard.

Ward Parkway has a width of 225 to 500 feet, and has become one of the great parkways of America. It has a double roadway with a lovely medial park, fine old trees, to which were added many new ones, liberal planting of shrubbery, blooming flowers, etc., largely paid for by the Ward Investment Company and our company.

The city agreed to pay half the cost of the paving of each roadway if the Wards and our company would pay the other half. I shall describe later how, in order to get this continuous parkway through to Gregory Boulevard, the J.C. Nichols Company purchased additional ground south of the Ward farm from members of the Wornall family, and within two or three years both roadways were completed to Meyer Circle...about two and a half miles from Wornall Road and Ward Parkway. At this point our company gave to the city a beautiful fountain with three handsome seahorses, and a large circular pool. I had personally purchased this fountain in Europe. We installed it, planted it well with shrubbery, etc., and it is now considered one of the most beautiful spots in all of Kansas City.

We Preserve Old Shawnee Mission

In about 1920 I became interested in preservation of the old Shawnee Mission buildings, a sort distance west of the state line in Johnson County, adjacent to our development. These buildings were started in 1839 as a Methodist mission for the Indians, and at that time it was the farthest outpost to the west on the Santa Fe and Oregon trails.

Our company spent over \$6,000 in organizing, etc., all the Methodist churches and similar organizations in the state of Kansas, to develop an attitude on the part of the state legislature to acquire the buildings and a reasonable amount of land to form a state park and to preserve these historic buildings for posterity. We were defeated in the session of the legislature in which we made the battle, but in the next session got the measure through and the state acquired the buildings and approximately twelve acres of land to provide a good setting.

This is undoubtedly the most important historic landmark in all of this part of the nation and while at that time it was not related in any way to the activities of our company, I have always had great pride in the fact that our company was instrumental in bringing about this splendid national monument so close to the areas which our company has spent so many years developing into the finest residential section we knew how to produce.

The active organization which was set up at that time (composed principally of women in Mission Township and Johnson County) and which still carries on, have done an excellent job, in which the entire state is justified in taking great pride. This historical museum is of great interest and many classes of school children from over this whole area are getting immense benefit from frequent visits to the museum and the mission.

We Make a Survey

Many years before (even before we took over the Ward farm and the Simpson farm to handle) Mr. Taylor and I and others of our staff began to travel over the country to study

the history and record of other high-class subdivisions. We were disturbed that many of them eventually proved financial failures, even though in many cases they had been developed by the heirs of the original owners of the land, and they had no cost for the land itself. This caused us a lot of concern, and we carefully studied the reasons for such failures. We have always felt that this survey was of enormous value to us in demonstrating how very carefully we must watch not to be led astray by extravagant planning, landscape treatment, etc., which might have only beauty to recommend it, and overlook entirely the fact that in the long run any development should be able to make a profit. Many such high-class subdivisions became financially involved; restrictions were wiped out, and investment of many millions of dollars in homes was sadly depreciated.

It was obvious to us that it was wise to look ahead and study carefully the many influences which would maintain permanency of good neighborhoods, all of which led to the study of self-perpetuating restrictions, and setting up of homes associations. Our perpetual restrictions were the first in the country and have been copied many, many times, all to the advantage of the home owner.

As we studied those older good subdivisions throughout the country, we analyzed with great care reasons for many of them declining. As I say we found in many of them restrictions had expired or were about to expire without self-perpetuating clauses. At that time when restrictions expired it was necessary to get the signatures of the majority of front feet property owners in order to extend the restrictions for another period. This involved a tremendous amount of work...many of the owners had died and their heirs scattered far and wide...frequently the heirs were minors involving guardianship problems...so that it was an almost impossible task to get a majority of signatures. So, we hit upon the plan of reversing the process. That is, we wrote the restrictions so that at the end of the restricted period they would automatically extend themselves unless a majority of front feet owners would agree to abandon the restrictions. We specified that such an instrument must be filed at least five years before expiration. Of course, this was just as difficult to do as it had been to get them extended at the end of a specified time, and so the result is perpetual restrictions, and neighborhoods that would remain fine places to live, and retain their residential character and value through generations!

We Study Long Time Plans

We found that in many subdivisions proper provision had not been made for neighborhood facilities such as elementary schools, high schools, churches, parks, shopping centers, playgrounds, etc. Many of them failed to connect their streets, boulevards and traffic-ways into the main arteries of the cities, so that it was difficult to get into the places of large employment in the downtown areas of the cities.

Some of them were seriously damaged by encroachment around the edges of good residential sections of unsightly, uncontrolled groups of filling stations, hot dog stands, drive-in eating places, and miscellaneous outlying shops. Such development was usually found at the entrance of important highways into the city, most often beyond the city limits with no municipal or zoning control. In such shop centers there was no uniformity of architecture, any all sorts of signs were permitted...large Neon, huge billboards, screaming roof signs, projecting signs of all types, etc., giving a most unfavorable impression to visitors coming into the city.

Frequently there were staggering building lines with no attempt for harmony between design of buildings, all ending in a hodge-podge layout, not only ugly but detrimental to the surrounding neighborhood and the city at large.

As we studied this matter more and more carefully, we became convinced of the immense importance of controlling not only our own neighborhoods, but the fringes of our city, and determined upon a course of spacing and building shopping centers in a manner that they would be most convenient, and at the same time blend favorably into the residential character of neighborhoods, thus not affecting the value of adjacent property or sightliness of neighborhoods, and at the same time become a component part of orderliness and beauty.

Through the years we exercised very careful control of all such matters, and that is one of the reasons the Country Club District has become a sort of Mecca for all subdividers who come here in numbers to study it and then go home and try to emulate our example.

Our studies also showed us that this same careful planning should be followed in placing of schools, churches, parks, golf clubs, and other similar amenities of life that go to make up a complete and well planned subdivision.

Furthermore, we learned the advisability of laying out streets in a new residential community so that they would lead easily into wide arteries of travel at proper places, thus connecting the entire street network in an efficient manner with boulevards, traffic-ways, etc., within the city or toward the city, always thinking of an easy flow of traffic.

Our study of other cities revealed that many of the lots were overcrowded and that the developer had not maintained ample setbacks from streets or free space between the homes. Many had no control of outbuildings, or attempted to exercise control of architecture. In some instances houses were placed on corner lots so that they seriously injured adjoining homes in at least one direction. Also, our survey disclosed that it was much better to have overhead power lines at the rear of the lots instead of in the streets as many of the subdivisions over the country had.

Studying subdivisions objectively we saw the inadvisability of placing one-story and two-story houses in the same block with no effort to control the roof lines. We saw instances where a stiff, formal two or two and a half-story house was placed next to a modest one-story cottage with all light, air and sunshine usurped by the larger house. However, after close study of the entire effect, we concluded that one-story and story-and-a-half houses could be mixed in one block, providing the smaller house was not built so low it looked like a one-story house; and also providing the houses were not built too close to each other. Also, we found that the breaking or changing line of such control of height and size of homes should be at the rear lot line instead of across the street from one another on the same street.

Homes associations composed of all the owners of homes or lots of a certain area have done a great deal toward keeping a neighborhood in good character through the years. Our homes associations are set up with assessments based on land only, whether vacant or occupied by houses. Most of them have regular annual meetings with elections of board of directors who hold frequent meetings and divide up the activities among

committees. We have found them most helpful in working with municipal authorities, with public transportation companies, etc. They are usually most meticulous to see that their own neighborhood is not neglected.

Public Activities

Some thirty years ago Walter S. Dickey (now deceased), who had led the campaign for many years to develop navigation and flood control on the Missouri River, came to the Real Estate Board of Kansas City and said he was tired and worn out with the fight, and wanted the Real Estate Board to take over the leadership. I agreed to accept this responsibility because it seemed to me it was of tremendous value to Kansas City and this part of the country, and gave me an opportunity to do something worthwhile.

I proceeded to organize the Missouri River Navigation Association, raised a considerable fund of money in contributions, and employed a capable full-time secretary...the late George J. Miller.

For several years I traveled up and down the river visiting cities from St. Louis to Yankton, S.D., making speeches before industrialists, chambers of commerce, etc., and conferring with public officials of cities and states.

In order to prevent it from being regarded as too much of a Kansas City affair, Arthur J. Weaver, Falls City, Nebraska was selected as president of the association, and he did excellent work. (Mr. Weaver later became governor of the State of Nebraska.)

I extended some \$42,000 of my own money to carry on this fight, and was successful in developing strong support in a large majority of all the states along the above mentioned stretch of the river. Many trips were made to Washington to appear before proper departments of the government, and congressional committees. As a result a nine-foot channel was adopted between St. Louis and Kansas City, and a six-foot channel to Sioux City, Iowa, and more than \$100,000,000 was appropriated by the Federal Government, to carry out this project. Since that time very large additional amounts of appropriations have been made.

During the administration of either Mayor Cowgill, or Mayor Jost (I forget which) I was appealed to take the leadership in a campaign to get a bond issue passed to build a permanent water system of adequate size to meet the growing needs of Kansas City. I first worked with the legislature of Kansas to get an act passed permitting acquirement of a tract of ground on the Kansas side of the state line by Kansas City, Missouri...to be tax exempt...which would give sufficient space for a pumping plant, sediment basins, purification basins, etc., to serve the people of Kansas City, Missouri. Although the Kansas legislature responded splendidly, it was finally decided the plant should be put across the county line in Clay County, Missouri.

A strange thing about this campaign was that so few of the business men of Kansas City, Missouri realized the importance of looking ahead to provide ample water supply. For at least six weeks I beat the streets trying to raise a fund to promote a vote on the bond issue...trying to organize teams of men to raise the funds to promote the election, etc., but found most of our business leaders at the most only lukewarm, and entirely lacking in enthusiasm.

The *Kansas City Star* gave excellent support, and finally the Chamber of Commerce and Real Estate Board fell into line, after which we encountered some political involvement as to which party might be in power for expenditure of the bond issue (which I recall was estimated would be some \$11,000,000). Finally, however the election was successfully carried.

In retrospect I cannot recall any cause into which I put more hard work that seemed so bleakly discouraging in the beginning, but which eventually brought me more gratification because of the ultimate outcome. As a matter of fact, there were weeks during this period when I did not even go to my own office, but devoted my whole time to the project in which I was so intensely interested, and which I was convinced was of such vast value to our town and this part of the country. Our rapid growth during the ensuing years has well justified my confidence in the need of a larger water plant capacity, and I am willing to concede, that though I worked so hard to get the plant on the Kansas side, undoubtedly the Clay County site was preferable, even though it meant abandonment of quite an investment on the part of Kansas City, Missouri.

In 1926 upon the death of the late William Rockhill Nelson, founder and owner of the *Kansas City Star*, a trust fund was set up including all of Mr. Nelson's property, upon which later was realized more than \$11,000,000 in cash. Mr. Nelson's will provided that the presidents of the universities of Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma should form a "Presidents' Board" and they in turn should elect two or more trustees, to be known as the "University Trustees" and they were to have full responsibility and control of this fund...that is, look after the investment of the fund (which was rigidly set up in the will), purchase and display objects of art, all in accordance with provisions set out in the will. The late H.V. Jones, the late William Volker, and I were selected as the first three trustees, and I have served continuously for the past twenty-three years on this board, and am now chairman.

Later Mrs. William Rockhill Nelson, and Mrs. Irwin Kirkwood (Mrs. Kirkwood being Mr. Nelson's daughter) and her husband upon their death left large bequests toward the erection of an art gallery upon the twenty acre tract where the Nelson home (Oak Hall) had stood for many years, and which was deeded to the city to be under the immediate control of the Board of Park Commissioners of Kansas City.

Later Frank Rozzelle, attorney for Mr. Nelson, at his death bequeathed \$200,000 toward this building fund, and this money was used for the erection of a handsome court as a part of the gallery structure which was named "Rozzelle Court."

Then an arrangement was entered into with the trustees of the Mary Atkins Trust (H.V. Jones and David Childs) whereby they expended some \$750,000 of their funds in the erection of a part of the structure, altogether providing an art gallery costing over \$3,000,000 in those days of much lower costs. It is a building of which the citizens of this city are justly proud.

Since the Trust was established some \$8,000,000 has been invested in purchase of objects of art, and today these collections are regarded as among the best, although not

the largest, to be found in America. The Chinese field ranks probably not less than third in all of the United States.

During all these years I have given unstintingly of my time to the administration of the affairs of this trust, because of a deep interest in the cause of art and cultural pursuits for our part of the country. Through the years I have assumed quite large part of the responsibility of personally directing a lot of the purchases of the objects of art recommended by various members of the gallery staff and art advisers of repute.

Many years ago I became one of the leaders of the better roads movement throughout the states of Missouri and Kansas, traveling extensively through both states in an effort to encourage more interest in improvement of rural roads which would be of wide general benefit to respective areas.

Some fifteen years ago I initiated the first movement in the State of Kansas (and later helped to initiate a like movement in the State of Missouri) to set up state industrial commissions devoted to greater development of industry in those states. In fact, I made the first talk on behalf of an industrial commission before a large group meeting in Pittsburg, Kansas, and personally appeared many times before legislative committees of Kansas and conferred with Kansas officials and aroused the interest of leading business men throughout the state, all of which finally resulted in a Kansas Industrial Commission, which has since received excellent appropriations from the state and has done an outstanding job in surveying and bringing to the knowledge of the public the wealth of natural resources upon which could be based a greater industrial development.

Thirty-five or more years ago I became interested in city planning and zoning, and made the first speech on the subject before the National Association of Real Estate Boards at their annual convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

I went to St. Louis several times and aroused the interest of the real estate board of that city, and than with the backing of Kansas City and St. Louis we got groups together to appear before legislative committees at the state capital, Jefferson City, finally resulting in setting up zoning regulations in these cities, and later others throughout the state.

Afterward I took the lead to get the City Council of Kansas City, Missouri to adopt a zoning law which has proved of great value to the development of the city over the years.

Also, I took an active part in zoning of townships adjoining cities and extension of zoning to cities of smaller size, and then did the same thing in the state of Kansas, bringing about the authority in both states for county zoning which today has become generally approved throughout the state, and has undoubtedly saved hundreds of millions of dollars in real estate values that would otherwise have been lost by the improper use of property in proximity to residential neighborhoods and other similar uses.

At one time I was a frequent speaker before real estate boards, chambers of commerce, and other groups in various cities throughout the United States urging that

zoning laws be authorized by their states, and that city planning commissions be established in the cities even including cities of considerably smaller size.

This work and its results in the betterment of our cities throughout the nation has always been one of the most gratifying achievements of my life.

Some thirty years ago the Kansas City Art Institute (which is now more than half a century old) was struggling along in inadequate quarters in a downtown building on McGee Street. I was persuaded to accept the presidency of the Institute and took the lead in expanding its financial support at a time when it was deep in debt. I was able to procure contributions to pay off this debt; worked out a plan to move them out to a rented house on Armour Boulevard, and later was instrumental in getting the A.R. Meyer ten acre estate at 45th and Warwick Boulevard, including a large brick home which has been expanded several times, but still remains the headquarters of this fine school. Then I resigned the presidency.

I take pride in the fact that I was able to get many large bequests and gifts...particularly those of Mrs. U.S. Epperson for the building of Epperson Hall; Mr. and Mrs. Howard Vanderslice for the setting up of a large scholarship fund; and also interesting Mr. and Mrs. J.V. Irving to the extent that later they made bequests totaling some \$100,000.00.

The Institute grew rapidly in number of students and greatly increased its faculty and today it stands among three or four of the leading art institutes in America with some thousand students in annual attendance, and some fifty instructors with broad coverage...particularly including industrial design. (The name of the school was recently changed to Kansas City Art Institute and School of Industrial Design).

Since I retired as president I have remained as a member of the board of governors and have taken an active part in all its affairs.

Many years ago I took a similar position in helping resuscitate the Kansas City Conservatory of Music to bring it into a more active serviceable institution, and for some six years devoted a large amount of time toward getting it in better financial condition; increasing its enrollment and faculty, and then I resigned in order to devote my time and effort to other causes that I felt were lagging and which were of great importance to greater Kansas City and the Middle West.

Along with Sigmund Harzfeld and Cliff C. Jones, and others, I was one of the first few men to take the lead in establishing a symphony orchestra, not only financially, but in beating the streets every year to get contributions to build up the quality and size of the symphony, and helped to carry on a program to extend the concerts over a large area surrounding Kansas City. This orchestra later became known as the Philharmonic Orchestra, and I am still on its board of directors and an ardent supporter of it in every way.

In the early days I was one of the leaders in establishing the Sunset Hill School for Girls, being one of its largest contributors, and for many years giving a great deal of time.

I did the same for Country Day School for Boys (now known as Pembroke-Country Day School) and again I was the second largest contributor and gave a large amount of time for many years. These two schools today rank among the two top private schools of their character in the Middle West.

I spent eight years as a member of the Board of Education and gave this work a tremendous amount of time. Mr. Volker (now deceased) and I were on a committee to check all repairs and improvements on all school buildings in the city, and each summer we devoted some three weeks to this task. In the expenditure of a \$5,000,000 bond issue that had been voted for repairs and additional school buildings I worked out a plan of bringing into conference architects and building contractors that resulted in completely revamping some of the early extravagant layouts of the school building, bringing about economy in use of new materials and equipment. It was estimated by other members of the Board that my efforts saved some \$500,000 in the use of this bond issue.

Though my term had four more years to run I resigned from this Board at the end of eight years because I felt I could make my activities of more value in other directions.

In 1926 President Calvin Coolidge appointed me as a member of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission having to do with the physical development of our national capital. I was greatly pleased with this appointment because it was my firm conviction that our national capital should be the most beautiful and best planned city in the world. The long range plans developed by this Commission under the leadership of my dear friend F.A. Delano (uncle of President Roosevelt), and later General U.S. Grant, III, have certainly helped to bring about this dream, and looking into the future I am sure it will one day be a reality.

The work was intensely interesting, and brought me into contact with many of the greatest men of our country. It was with much gratification that I was re-appointed by my good friend President Herbert Hoover, and later by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt for two more terms. This service, of course, was entirely gratis on my part, but I felt honored that I had been able to contribute my small part to such a wonderful end.

I served on this Commission for twenty-two years, and then because I had been carrying such a tremendous load in civic and other national affairs in addition to my own business...and naturally was getting older...I tendered my resignation to President Harry S. Truman, who after several days deliberation accepted it and relieved me of further duties. At the time of my resignation General Grant gave a wonderful testimonial dinner for me which was attended by many notable men in Washington.

Counting travel time...I had to go to Washington at least every other month to attend meetings...I most gladly gave more than two and a half years of my life to this splendid work. On the walls of my office are four framed certificates signed by the three presidents who had honored me by the appointment. I have no other possession of which I am prouder.

In the early days of the Roosevelt administration when an effort was made to establish the National Recovery Act, I was requested by the National Association of Real Estate Boards, the National Association of Home Builders and other groups, to go to Washington to set up such regulations for our profession. When I arrived there had already been set up some extremely drastic provisions as they affected home building and building of commercial structures.

I employed a full time secretary at my own expense, and with the help of other realtors, contractors, mortgage bankers, etc., was able to make many improvements. However, we were all relieved when this Act was declared unconstitutional.

Soon after the declaration of World War II, Chester Bowles strongly advocated establishment of commercial rent control and the matter was scheduled to come before the Banking and Currency Committee of the Senate.

The National Association of Real Estate Boards again called upon me to go to Washington, and I remained there approximately five weeks working day and night lining up support among realtors, property owners, and others in all senatorial districts represented on the Banking and Currency Committee. During this time we spent more than \$4,000 in long distance telephone calls and telegrams, and started a stream of protest from all over the country which finally resulted in defeat of Chester Bowles's recommendation after he had submitted it in great detail and seemed sure it would be passed.

Jack Mowbrey of Baltimore was with me practically every day. Boyd Barnard of Philadelphia, Herbert Nelson, and others all responded in a wonderful manner. Also, many other realtors from as far away as California, Nevada, Colorado, Arkansas, Iowa, Kentucky, etc., who could do so came down to help us work with their own particular senators.

In my opinion there is no question but what if we had not carried on this fight, commercial rent control would have been impinged on the entire country. While there may have been some need for control of residential property due to the necessity of shelter for people, we firmly believed there was no shortage of commercial buildings, and that there was no manner in which rent control on such buildings could have been fairly administered. Inasmuch as rents vary greatly as to the particular side of the street, location near stores with big drawing power, and many, many other factors affecting commercial rents it would have been impossible to administer properly commercial rent control.

At night I used to start making my calls early in the evening, taking advantage of the two hours difference in time and reached realtors and others out on the West Coast as late as twelve o'clock at night.

I do not believe I ever saw a better example of cooperation as was shown by the realtors of the country, and it has always been gratifying to me that our little group that worked so hard on this matter, was able to head off completely with fast work a measure that was expected to go through without opposition. We found senators giving very little

thought to all the problems involved in the control of commercial rents, considering the variance of locations in cities, adaptability to certain types of business, etc.

We prepared figures that showed great variation of rent on buildings in different groups and different locations throughout cities which apparently was new information to the members of the committee.

At one time they were discussing control on new buildings based upon the rentals of adjacent buildings without giving any weight at all to the increasing costs of construction, or the unusual features that any particular building might call for in order to meet the needs of some particular merchant or other use. Chester Bowles had a long list of witnesses to testify in support of this matter which he regarded as the grave need for commercial rent control. In my opinion if this had been impinged on the country it would still be in existence in many areas throughout the United States, long after the war ended, and it would have greatly deterred the construction of commercial buildings of all kinds and proved a real hardship.

The Mortgage Bankers Association was particularly helpful to us in making the fight, as were some of the large insurance companies and large property holders in cities throughout the country. We were called upon to act with great speed because when I first arrived in Washington to lead the fight Chester Bowles was scheduled to testify within a few days and for a time it looked like action would be taken by the Banking and Currency Committee within eight or ten days from the time we arrived. However, we gradually built up enough question in the minds of this Committee about the soundness of the proposal that we got them to postpone their action and finally got almost unanimous vote against rent control on commercial buildings.

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Epilogue

By Ethel V. Treshadding

For many years before I ever met Mr. J.C. Nichols I had admired him because of what he had done for Kansas City, and when in October 1933 I had the opportunity to become his personal secretary, I considered it a privilege to be a part of the great things he was doing, not only for Kansas City, but for the Middle West and the nation as a whole. I soon learned that my job was to be a liberal and broad education in a great variety of subjects. I was amazed at his vast, seemingly tireless, energy, and the manner in which he drove himself, and at the same time succeeded in getting the greatest amount of work and cooperation out of everybody with whom he came into contact, whether it be his own employees or other business leaders who associated themselves with him in his many activities. The work was interesting, and though I worked harder than I ever had before, and under a terrific strain most of the time, the days whizzed by and I loved it!

Another thing I learned about his personality very soon, was his great kindness of heart. I'll never know how many times I saw him lend a kindly hand...go out of his way to give good advice, and be of whatever help he could to person after person...many of whom had no claim whatever on his kindness. From the very beginning, I had the feeling that I had a kind, strong friend to whom I could take my troubles and always get a sympathetic and understanding help. He never failed me.

In the foregoing autobiography which Mr. Nichols was in the process of writing at the time of his death, many things were omitted...or rather I should say, many of his activities were in the latter years of his life which part of his story he had not yet reached.

One of the things which he failed to bring out, and upon which he had always been most insistent, was that it was not he alone who had built the Country Club District, and that due credit should be given to those men who had associated themselves with him through the years, and whose combined efforts it was that brought the District into the position it holds today as the finest residential section in the world. It was the tireless willingness of these other men to follow his lead; these men who had thrown in their own ideas and ability and had worked by his side that had brought this all about.

As I learned to know Mr. Taylor, Mr. Grant, Mr. Kennard, and all the other men who went to make up this company, I soon noticed how smoothly their minds clicked together, and how one complemented the other to make a wonderful working team, and I could well understand why Mr. Nichols felt that it was only right and proper that these men should have their full share of all credit.

The Country Club District was carefully planned and laid out in such manner that each neighborhood has its own type of homes...that is, you will find areas of magnificent large homes set in spacious lawns...other areas of somewhat smaller homes on smaller lots...and graduating on down to modest cottages with lovely smooth lawns, well planted with trees and shrubbery, and all blending into one harmonious whole. The streets follow

gently curving lines along which are many varieties of trees which in some sections have grown to a size that they arch gracefully over the streets.

Also, each section of the Country Club District is complete with its own shopping center, well placed and planned to fit into the residential neighborhood and enhance rather than detract from its character. Too, elementary and high schools (public and private); churches of many denominations; and all of the other amenities of life are provided so that the residents may enjoy gracious, comfortable living.

It was not until the Country Club District was well on the way to becoming the beautiful homes area it is today, that Mr. Nichols, upon one of his trips to Europe, conceived the idea of adorning the little parks, street intersections, etc., with fine outdoor garden objects of art, such as fountains; benches; animalistic and human figures, gracefully arching wrought iron gateways, etc. Through the years the company has spent thousands dollars in purchase and setting of more than three hundred such objects. As one drives along, at every turn of the road one finds a lovely fountain with the sun shining on sparkling water...a graceful marble figure of an animal or human...a beautifully carved bench in a quiet nook...all set in a park like area among the color of blooming flowers or lovely evergreens...or in winter, perhaps, covered with snow.

No history of the Country Club District would be complete without mention of the Country Club Plaza, that fabulous shopping center at the gateway to the District. It was started some twenty-five years ago, and is today conceded to be the finest shopping center in the world...and in fact, a model for many.

All the buildings are of Spanish architecture, many of them with tall handsome towers, beautiful rounded domes, and attractive cupolas, all with lights inside and flood lights at night. All the buildings are decorated with imported Mexican tile or lace-like terracotta. Many are adorned with graceful wrought iron balconies, etc. On the exterior walls are colorful Mexican tile plaques, and in some instances niches have been provided and lovely objects of art placed therein.

Free parking stations...some of them surrounded with low stucco walls topped with dull red tile...have been provided, with their corners inset to form tiny parks in which have been placed beautiful old fountains, and other objects of art, along with marble benches inviting the shopper to rest in the shade of the trees and enjoy the splashing of the sparkling water.

The streets are wide, and curving; the sidewalks wide and kept scrupulously clean. None of the buildings are more than two stories because Mr. Nichols always advocated "spreading the district horizontally rather than vertically" and in that manner minimizing the traffic load on the streets.

One of the most remarkable sights in this country is the Country Club Plaza at Christmas time when all the buildings, including the towers, etc., are outlined with many colored lights. Huge Christmas trees are placed on the roofs and lighted with colored lights. Heroic sized red galvanized metal candles, with lighted tips, are placed at intervals along the curbing, and huge silver and red bells are hung from the light standards. People

come here from many miles to see this thrilling sight, and it has been proclaimed from coast to coast.

As I said above, the work was hard, and the hours long. Mr. Nichols showed me no mercy, and certainly showed none to himself. There were times when he would be so physically exhausted that he could hardly keep going, but he pushed himself unmercifully. There never was a time when I lost my deep interest in what I was doing...never a time when I ceased to admire Mr. Nichols and have the deepest affection for him. In fact, I often marveled at the tremendous admiration and love he inspired in everyone with whom he came in contact, and I always gloried in the many marks of appreciation and admiration he received on all sides.

At the time I came to work for Mr. Nichols he had been back and forth to Washington for many weeks struggling to set up a favorable code under the National Recovery Act for home builders, but shortly thereafter the Act was declared unconstitutional, and he came home to stay.

It was just a few weeks prior to the “grand” opening of the Nelson Gallery on which Mr. Nichols had spent so much time over the years, and that was my initiation into the manner in which he worked. The time was getting short and he’d been away so much that there was a tremendous amount to be done because he was so determined the opening should be a wonderful affair. Everyone pitched in willingly to follow Mr. Nichols’s lead and the gallery opened in a magnificent burst of glory on December 11, 1933.

I do not recall how many invitations were sent out, but it was a Herculean task to assemble the hundreds of lists of names from all over the United States, and Europe, check them carefully for duplications, and see that the invitations were hand addressed and sent out. The entire job was done in our office under my direct supervision.

In addition to getting out the invitations Mr. Nichols very carefully made up a long list of small and large items to which special attention must be paid before the night of the opening. Also, he arranged with certain people to entertain the various distinguished guests from New York, and other art centers. It actually was a three-day celebration, and an elaborate program was arranged. No detail was too small for Mr. Nichols’s personal attention, and the whole thing went off in a splendid manner.

The gallery was heralded as a monumental task admirably accomplished. The building itself, and the installation are outstanding among galleries of the world, and the collection, though small, was of undisputed quality, and through the years it has grown steadily under Mr. Nichols’s guiding hand. He undoubtedly saved the Trust many thousands of dollars with his shrewd buying ability, and yet never for a moment sacrificed quality. Every object purchased was carefully passed upon by the staff, and other art advisers whose knowledge was unquestioned.

About that time some of Mr. Nichols’s best friends in the National Association of Real Estate Boards began a concerted movement to elect him president of that body. For

the next several years he steadfastly refused to accept the position though a tremendous amount of pressure was brought to bear upon him. I frequently told him I thought it would take less time and energy to accept the position for one year than it was to continually say no to his good friends. His answer to this was that he would not take the leadership of the association unless he could end his term with some definite contribution to the realtors of the country, and that he felt he did not have the time and energy it would take. He refused to be a figurehead. Of course, there is no question but what he would have given the association superb leadership.

He did accept vice-presidency and leadership of the South Central Region of the association and served for about three years during which time he conducted regional meetings which were the most successful of any similar meetings held throughout the country. He had a wonderful knack of building up attendance, and stirring enthusiasm, but he put a great deal of his own personality into it; certainly he gave generously of himself to the entire national association.

After his friends became convinced that he was not going to serve as president, they gave a wonderful testimonial dinner in his honor at one of their annual meetings in New York. The minutes of this meeting were printed and beautifully bound and presented to him. He considered this little book one of his most prized possessions. It contains many splendid testimonials from the friends who knew him best.

Though he had resigned from the presidency of the Kansas City Art Institute before I went to work for him, he still remained very active, and he led two industrial art exhibitions at the Institute which proved most successful and went a long way toward convincing some of the hard-headed business men of our town that art was not merely something for long-haired cranks, but that it had a definite place in the building of a better city and bringing more manufacturing here. In one talk he made before the Chamber of Commerce...to a capacity crowd...he stressed the vast need for more artistic designing...he cited the tremendous store of varied raw products with which our area abounds, and won over many of those present to the cause of art to which they had formerly paid little attention. As a result of his campaign, the name of the Institute was changed to "The Kansas City Art Institute and School of Industrial Design," and a special department was set up to teach this sort of thing.

Another activity into which Mr. Nichols put much of his heart and energy was as chairman of the Finance Committee of Mission Hills Country Club. He had helped organize this club and our company had built the golf course and clubhouse, and he valued his membership there very highly. As chairman of the finance committee, it was his duty to appoint the members of his committee, and then to get suggested budgets from the chairmen of each of the other committees; call his committee into a meeting and after careful consideration funds were allotted in accordance with the best judgment of the group. He held this position for some twenty-five years, and kept the club on an even financial keel. Finally, because of the press of many other activities, he felt he had to resign.

For several years Mr. Nichols served as a member of the Purdue Foundation, which was making a great deal of research in an effort to build homes at lower cost for the lower income brackets without sacrificing any of the amenities of life. Mr. Nichols worried a good deal that through the years so many improvements in housing had come into general use that it was difficult to provide good housing for those who did not have the earning power to afford them, and he never missed an opportunity to study some new lines of thought that might lead to lowering of costs.

In the spring of 1938 Mr. and Mrs. Nichols, along with their daughter, Eleanor and her husband, Earl Allen, and Miller Nichols, spent four months touring South America. While down there Mr. Nichols was greatly honored by the authorities of all the countries he visited. He was sought out for interviews by all the leading newspapers, and his advice was asked on matters pertaining to zoning; housing; shopping centers; city planning; river transportation; obligations of real estate boards to their communities; art in industry; what discoveries in synthetic chemistry mean to producers of farm products, and all the many other subjects upon which he had grown to be an authority. Over the years and until his death, he maintained correspondence with many prominent South Americans on numerous subjects of interest.

Upon his return I was delighted to find that he had become intensely interested in the possibilities of a great trade between that continent and our own Midwest. His enthusiasm was most infectious, and he immediately began to inject the thought into the minds of our business leaders in Kansas City and the Midwest...He pointed out the potentialities of a great waterway down the Missouri, and the Mississippi to New Orleans and on to the south taking our farm and manufactured products, and returning with many of the products of South America. This was something that immediately sparked the imagination, and Mr. Nichols had no trouble in calling a conference in Kansas City which was attended by more than four hundred important men of this region, and resulted in setting up a Midwest Foreign Trade Association.

When Mr. Nichols resigned as a member of the Board of Education, the newest and one of the finest elementary schools in the city was named for him. It is a beautiful building of cream-colored brick standing on a high hill in the Country Club District, and through the years it has grown rapidly and has been the source of a great deal of pride to Mr. Nichols. For many years he took great pleasure in delivering the commencement address, and he frequently presented the school with a nice tree to be planted on the grounds. These trees have grown to fine size and are a fine memorial to his generosity. The faculty of the school and the many thousands of children who have received their education there have always looked up to and admired Mr. Nichols and enjoyed the close connection with the namesake of their school.

In 1937 when the labor unrest was at its peak in Kansas City, Mr. Nichols led a vigorous, dynamic fight...working, day and night (in fact, one morning he came to the

office soiled and badly rumpled, looking extremely weary, and told me he'd been out all night attending meetings and organizing groups to combat the lawlessness which was then springing up in our town.) Large caravans of men were driving around the city going to building jobs and threatening...and even beating the workers in an effort to force them to go on strike.

Mr. Nichols was a firm believer in the right of men and women to work, and was convinced that there was a common ground upon which labor and employers could meet. In those days he pointed with pride to the fact that his own employees stood solidly behind him, many of them having been in the employ of the company for as many as twenty-five years or more. It was during those days that he called me one morning at 5:30 and asked me to come to the office. When I arrived (half asleep) I found him and Mrs. Nichols already very busily engaged in going over names of business leaders in our town to determine upon which ones he could depend for help in this crisis. By eight o'clock that morning we had our list complete and the three of us went to breakfast, and then Mr. Nichols went downtown to his first meeting of the day. Early morning...late at night ... Sunday...holiday...it was all the same to him when there was a job to be done, and he never stopped to think whom he pressed into service.

Early in 1939 when the corrupt political situation in Kansas City first became public, Mr. Nichols was among the first to join the Forward Kansas City Committee, the first active movement against the disgraceful conditions which were then being exposed. This group later became consolidated with the several other worthy organizations which were given credit for the final arousing of public sentiment which helped the people of Kansas City to beat machine politics and institute clean, healthful government. As usual Mr. Nichols threw himself wholeheartedly into this cause, working day and night to the end. It was a grand battle, and of course, the results are all too well known.

Immediately after that Mr. Nichols began assiduously to do things over the country which he hoped would counteract the unsavory reputation which had been won for our city as a result of the political situation. He made it a point to give long interviews to various metropolitan newspapers; wrote stories about the beauty of the Country Club District and the Plaza to national magazines over the country which they were glad to publish. He sent many photographs of the beautiful art objects in the District with descriptions and history of such objects; sent photographs of the Plaza at Christmas, etc., which were printed and circulated throughout the country, all with the thought in the back of his mind that he could convince the world that Kansas City was not the rip-roaring 'cowtown' it had been pictured.

In February 1938 our company received one of the greatest tributes ever accorded to a real estate concern. *The National Real Estate Journal* sent their editor to Kansas City to spend more than a week interviewing the heads of all our departments...studying the District in minute detail...taking many pictures of the various phases of our operations, etc., etc. Then they devoted the entire issue of their magazine to this outstanding 'success' story. It was the only time that that important publication had ever done such a thing, and we all felt very much complimented.

During Mr. Nichols's many visits to Washington he came to know intimately and admire many of the nation's most important leaders, and it was not surprising when Averill Harriman, recognizing his ability and splendid mind, asked him to serve as a member of the Business Advisory Council for the Department of Commerce. He attended many meetings of this group and never ceased to be impressed with the caliber of the men with whom he was associated. He felt this body was of immeasurable value to the federal administration, and enjoyed the contacts he made, and felt pride in the fact that he was being of service to his country. He served on this Council for several years until his death.

For a number of years prior to his death Mr. Nichols served as a member of the Committee on University Resources for Harvard. This group had the responsibility of investment of a greater portion of the funds of the university. Inasmuch as he had attended Harvard only one year as a postgraduate, he felt this was a great honor, and always appreciated the fact that President Conant had so recognized him.

In July 1940 when war with Germany threatened, and the country was preparing for defense, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called Mr. Nichols to Washington to serve as a dollar-a-year man. He responded to this call with the understanding it would be for six months, but he remained for thirteen months. General William Knudsen, who was head of the entire defense program, appointed Mr. Nichols as head of the Miscellaneous Equipment Division where he passed upon the purchase of a billion dollars worth of equipment for the Quartermaster Corps, the Supply and Counts Department of the Navy, the Medical Corps, and many other branches of the armed forces.

Mr. Nichols organized his own staff, and plunged whole-heartedly into a grinding program of hard work and long hours, often working far into the night. General Knudsen, in a talk he made in Detroit (and which was published in papers over the country), made the statement that he never in his life had seen a man who was willing to work so hard, or who was able to accomplish as much as Mr. Nichols. It was with real regret that General Knudsen accepted his resignation at the end of thirteen months.

During his time in Washington he came home only a few times and then merely for brief visits with his family and to check matters of importance with Mr. Taylor and the other associates in our company.

In some notes Mr. Nichols made after his return from Washington I found the following paragraph:

As soon as I arrived in Washington I was astounded to find that the proposed program of new defense plants included no defense plants, or air bases between the Mississippi River and the Rocky mountains except in the extreme south. I immediately contacted all the important officials in Washington, including President Roosevelt; Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox; Secretary of War, Stimson; Admiral Towers; head of air corps, and many others...not once, but many times. In fact, it might be said that I camped on their doorsteps! I rallied

support from leading industrialists, business officials and heads of chambers of commerce throughout the middle west, getting large delegations to come from certain states, and we finally changed the whole thinking in Washington and brought about establishment of a reasonable number of defense plants throughout the middle west. At that time there were more than 500 men a week being shipped out of Kansas City alone to defense plants on west and east coasts.

Also I succeeded in getting the Quartermaster Depot moved to Kansas City; and the North American Bomber Plant at Fairfax; the Remington Arms plant at Lake City, as well as Remington Arms plants in other western cities; and I also succeeded in getting an airplane factory located in Omaha, one in Oklahoma City, and Ft. Worth.

The final location of the huge Pratt & Whitney Plant was in accordance with this general policy, as also was the Sunflower Ordinance Plant at Lawrence and the Naval Air base at Olathe.

I estimate that this change of policy which I (along with many of the other deeply interested citizens of the middle west) was able to bring about has resulted in the establishment of more than a hundred defense plants, air bases, etc., in the middle west, many of which have been converted to peace time usage, and are still functioning.

In due time his dollar-a-year checks arrived...one for ninety-two cents and one for eight cents! Those he very proudly had framed to hang on the walls of his office, and frequently pointed them out to his visitors.

He returned from Washington in August of 1940, and though he was still full of his usual vigor and keen interest in the work he'd been doing, he was pretty weary, and inasmuch as his son, Miller, was then serving with the army in Honolulu, he and Mrs. Nichols decided to make a trip down there for a rest. They had a delightful time, but the nicest thing about it (in their estimation) was the fact that the army had adopted a new policy of releasing all men over twenty-eight years of age, and Miller, falling in that category, was given an honorable discharge and was able to accompany his mother and father home. (At that time our country was not in war.)

Later, after Pearl Harbor, Miller enlisted in the navy where he served for many months, coming out at the close of the war with the rank of lieutenant commander.

It was also in 1940 that Mr. Nichols was voted the "Man-of-the-Year" by the Metro Club of Kansas City for the great work he had done in Washington and at home to make Kansas City a better place in which to live. This was an honor not accorded to many men, and greatly coveted.

Immediately upon Mr. Nichols's return from the islands he received another summons to go to Washington to serve as consultant to W.E. Reynolds, Public Buildings Commissioner. He served in this capacity for six months, during which time he helped

locate dormitories and other buildings in the Washington area, as well as helped to decentralize some public offices throughout the country.

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor during this time.

While he was in Washington all these months he became well acquainted with Dr. Ernest Reid (the eminent scientist), and Mr. Edward Weidlein, head of Mellon Institute. Both of these men were former Kansans and were deeply interested in the welfare of the Middle West. In conversation with these two men Mr. Nichols became profoundly interested in the potentialities of research for the purpose of utilizing farm products...particularly so-called waste products...as well as the great abundance of other resources of this part of the country. They insisted that a great research institute that might be established out here would bring untold wealth and prosperity to this part of the country.

This led to the establishment of the Midwest Research Institute in Kansas City, which is now a going institution serving the five Middle Western states, and it is believed it will continue to grow and become a tremendous factor in building industry in this area to balance agriculture.

Many of Kansas City's leading business men came into this project with Mr. Nichols and together they organized a group that went out and raised three quarters of a million dollars to get the Institute started. They now have a splendid staff of scientists and are serving industry in a good way. A beautiful ten acre site was purchased south of the Nelson Art Gallery upon which a monumental type of building is ultimately to be erected to house the Institute.

Another project to which Mr. Nichols always looked forward, but which unfortunately he did not live to see, was the establishment of a fine educational, scientific and cultural center extending from the Kansas City Art Institute, and Nelson Gallery on the north clear through and including the University of Kansas City campus. This would be a beautiful park developed by the city, and would include not only the institutions mentioned above, but the Barstow School for Girls, the Midwest Research Institute, and the Linda S. Hall Scientific library. Also, a site in this park has been chosen for the erection of a handsome and symbolic statue to the memory of Mr. William Volker, one of Kansas City's greatest philanthropists, and a good friend of Mr. Nichols. It was Mr. Nichols thought that as the years went by there would also be other similar institutions of a cultural and educational nature that would be brought into this group, making what he felt would be the finest center of its kind in the world.

After having served for more than twenty-three years as a member of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission in Washington, Mr. Nichols felt he must resign because of the press of his own affairs at home, and the fact that Mrs. Nichols had suffered a severe heart attack and he disliked to be away from her so much. Consequently he sent his resignation to President Truman, who held it on his desk for many days before he decided to accept it. His letter of acceptance showed great appreciation for what Mr.

Nichols had done for his country through so many years, and deep regret that Mr. Nichols felt he must resign.

Shortly before his resignation, General U.S. Grant III, chairman of the Commission gave a testimonial dinner for Mr. Nichols in appreciation of his long years of unselfish service for our national capital. At this dinner were many of the most notable men in Washington and city planters of note; renowned architects, etc., from over the country. Those who were unable to be present sent telegrams and letters signifying their admiration and appreciation, and General Grant had them made in a handsome scrapbook which was one of his most prized possessions.

Conclusion

The latter part of December in 1947 Mr. Nichols's ninety-three year old mother passed away after an illness of several months. Through all the years of his life he had been a most devoted son, and though he realized how fortunate he was that his mother had been spared to him to such a grand age, her death was the source of much grief to him and the rest of his family and his sister and her family.

During the latter years of his mother's life when she had become somewhat childish, Mr. Nichols made a regular routine of sending her a picture postcard every day...I spent much of my time scouring the shops that sold such cards in an effort to find views which he had not yet sent, but there were many duplications which mattered not at all to her as long as he had sent it to her. It was sweet to notice every evening just before he gave up for the day, that he would reach for one of the cards...look up at me with a smile, and say, "Well, what can I write to Mama today?" Usually before I could answer he would write some cheerful, pleasant little remark and hand me the card to mail.

Too, for the last few years of her life when she had become confined entirely to her home, he went by to see her every morning on his way to the office, and again on his way home for dinner.

Mrs. Nichols had suffered tremendously the strain of Grandmother Nichols's long illness and death, and a few days after the funeral she had a serious heart attack, which came close to making an invalid of her. However, she rallied and came through with flying colors, though ever since she has had to take great care of herself. Being the kind of person she is...always full of life; a charming hostess who liked to be surrounded by interesting friends; a lover of good music; an earnest worker in all good causes...ever anxious to be up and doing, her heart condition has been quite a trial to her, but it is amazing how she meets the situation, and is ever ready to laugh and poke fun at herself as well as others.

Before ending this story I want to say about the three Nichols children that there never were children more devoted to their parents...children who had greater admiration and respect for the ability and genius of their father than Miller, Eleanor, and Clyde. And there never was a man who had more pride in, and love for his family than he had. I had many laughs at him when I heard him brag about his grandchildren. You would have thought no man had ever before had grandchildren!

During the months of his illness there never was a day that Eleanor did not spend some hours with him, and at the last she would sit for hours beside his bed which brought him much comfort and pleasure ... in fact, during the latter days, I understand there never was a time during the day when either Eleanor or her mother were not sitting at his side. He was a man who hated to be alone...he disliked a lot of idle chatter, but just to have people around him meant a great deal to him. His business associates, and his great host of admiring friends went to see him often, and when he became too ill to see all of them it made him unhappy, but the fact that they thought enough of him to come was a great consolation to him.

Knowing his personality as well as I did, I know how much it meant to him during his last days to have his family...his wife, his children, his children-in-law, and his grandchildren with him so constantly.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – J.C. Nichols Memoir

Arguably Jesse Clyde Nichols (1880-1950) was the single most influential individual to the development of metropolitan Kansas City. Moreover his work, ideas, and philosophy of city planning and development had far-reaching impact nationally – so much so that the Urban Land Institute has established the J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionary Urban Development to recognize a person or a person representing an institution whose career demonstrates a commitment to the highest standards of responsible development.

Nichols' objective was to “develop whole residential neighborhoods that would attract an element of people who desired a better way of life, a nicer place to live and would be willing to work in order to keep it better.” The Company under Nichols and his son, Miller Nichols (1911-2000), undertook such ventures as rental housing, industrial parks, hotels, and shopping centers. Perhaps the most widely recognized Nichols Company developments are the Country Club District and the Country Club Plaza Shopping Center, reportedly the first shopping area in the United States planned to serve those arriving by automobile rather than trolley car.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC0106) contains both personal and business files concerning J.C. Nichols' private and business life. Included are personal correspondence, family related material, and speeches and articles written by him. Business and financial files pertain to actions of the Company, including information about different developments and the securing of art objects; and printed materials produced by and about the Company.