

Kansas City Architects George Kessler, Henry Wright, and Sid and Herbert Hare

by William S. Worley

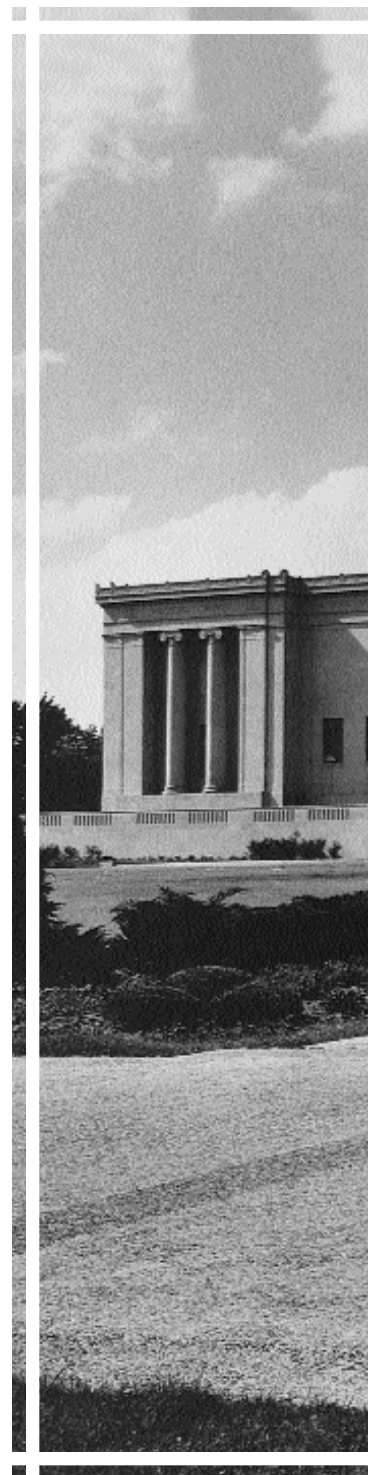
Hundreds of people each day visit Dealey Plaza in Dallas, the site of John F. Kennedy's assassination. Thousands more drive through Cherry Creek Park in Denver; the Fall Creek Parkway in Indianapolis; the North, South, or East Parkways in Memphis; or the mansion-lined Ward Parkway in Kansas City. Almost none of these people recognizes the landscapes they experience as the handiwork of a group of Kansas City urban planners and landscape architects.¹

George Kessler, Henry Wright, and Sid and Herbert Hare all contributed substantially to make midwestern and southwestern cities more than a patchwork of gridiron streets. These four planners had a tremendous impact on the urban landscapes of dozens of cities and subdivisions throughout the nation's midsection. However, their efforts have largely gone unheralded in the literature and in the collective histories of the communities they helped shape.

Kessler was one of the premier advocates of park and civic center planning known as the City Beautiful movement. In recent years he has gained a degree of recognition in Kansas City with the renaming of North Terrace Park in his

William S. Worley, who received his Ph.D. from the University of Kansas, is a research associate for *Kansas City Regional History* at the University of Missouri–Kansas City. His publications include *J.C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City: Innovation in Planned Residential Communities* (1990).

1. A version of this paper was presented during the Creating Urban Communities in the Trans-Mississippi West session at the eighteenth Mid-America Conference on History held at the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, September 12–14, 1996.



A Legacy to



The grounds of Kansas City's premier art museum, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, was a major project of Kansas City architects Sid and Herbert Hare.

honor, but few people in the other cities in which he worked would recognize his name. Wright transformed himself in the 1920s into an East Coast housing expert as well as land planner. His planning insights extended to the interiors of homes as well as into the design of surrounding grounds and neighborhoods, yet he is usually best remembered as a close friend of American journalist Lewis Mumford. The Hares designed cemeteries, parks, and entire cities such as Houston and Fort Worth, Texas, between 1910 and 1960, yet they have only one area named for them—the street on which Sid Hare built his home.

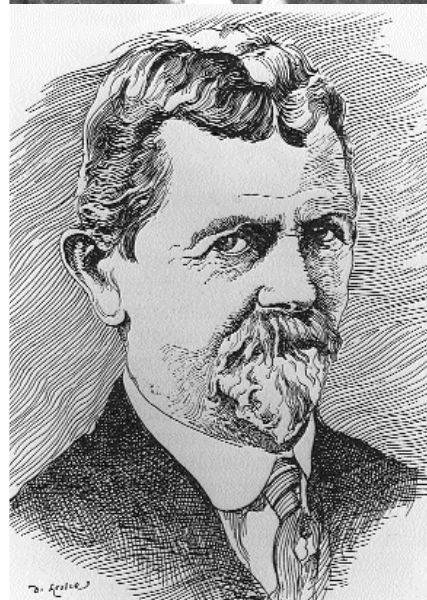
Urban planning history in the United States tends to concentrate on East Coast examples. Harvard training seems a prerequisite, and some direct inspiration from Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., America's premier nineteenth-century urban planner and landscape architect, is a requirement. Location in a city with sections planned by the Olmsted firm gains much attention. The most recent overview of the profession and its practice uses the time-honored example of the Chicago World's Fair as the genesis of city planning. This conforms to accepted planning history doctrine since the fairgrounds in Chicago were laid out by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. in the waning years of his active life. The site may have been midwestern, but the influence was East Coast and Olmstedian all the way.²

Most histories of city planning give at least passing mention of a plan developed at the same time as the Chicago fair outline—the Park and Boulevard Plan of Kansas City, Missouri. Both the fair and the publication of the Kansas City plan occurred in 1893. The two concepts developed independently of each

George Edward Kessler (1862–1923) began his career in Kansas City in 1882. In 1903 he hired Henry Wright, who worked with Kessler until 1909.



Sid J. Hare (1860–1938) began his design career in Kansas City in the 1880s and completed numerous park and cemetery designs.



S. Herbert Hare (1888–1960) joined his father Sid in 1910. Following his father's death he operated the Hare and Hare firm until 1960.



2. Alexander Garvin, *The American City: What Works, What Doesn't* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), 428–37; see also William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1964); and Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1988), which provides a more comprehensive survey of the ideas nationally.

other although George Kessler, co-writer of the Kansas City plan, certainly knew of Olmsted's work.³

As it turned out, Kansas City served as the training ground for a quartet of important planners in the early years of the planning profession. George Kessler came to the Kansas City region in 1882 with little practical experience beyond his German training. Henry Wright grew up in a Quaker family in Kansas City and received his schooling there and at the University of Pennsylvania. Sid Hare came to Kansas City in the 1860s as a young child with his family. His planning education came entirely on the job in the city engineer's office. Son Herbert was born and raised in the western Missouri metropolis but is the only one of the group to have studied at Harvard with Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.

Kessler lived in the Kansas City region from 1882 until 1910 when he transferred to St. Louis to look after his previously established office there. He continued an office in Kansas City and maintained his role as consultant to the Kansas City, Missouri, Board of Park and Boulevard Commissioners throughout this period. From about 1900 until his death in 1923, Kessler was on the road more than at home in either Kansas City or St. Louis. His planning commissions included park and boulevard work in such diverse locations as Dallas, Denver, Memphis, and Indianapolis, as well as Kansas City and St. Louis. At the time of his death, he was the landscape architect of record for the Liberty Memorial project in Kansas City.⁴

Henry Wright, who had lifelong family roots in Kansas City, seldom referred to his city of origin in

later life. Indeed, Wright hid his Kansas City origins so well that some of this closest professional colleagues thought he started his work independently in St. Louis. Actually the planner was born in Lawrence, Kansas, in 1878, and most of his secondary education occurred at Kansas City's Central High School.

Wright began working for George Kessler in 1903 after completing a two-year course in architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. In the 1920s he moved to New York City to participate in the nationally famous Regional Planning Association of America with Lewis Mumford, a publicist for the group, and Clarence Stein. Wright and Stein collaborated in planning Sunnyside in Queens and Radburn in New Jersey, two benchmark designs in the history of urban planning.⁵

Sid and Herbert Hare formed a father/son partnership from the time of Herbert's return from Harvard in 1910 until Sid's death in 1938. Sid Hare learned much of his landscaping skills while serving for more than a decade in the Kansas City municipal engineer's office in the 1880s and 1890s. He launched his solo career in cemetery design by accepting the job of superintendent at the city's new Forest Hill Cemetery in 1896. After starting a partnership as Hare and Hare, Herbert continued to operate the firm under the combined name until his death in Kansas City in 1960. Hare and Hare completed more city plans and park designs than did Kessler and Wright combined, but the lives and work of all four became intertwined.⁶

3. Possibly the most cited survey of U.S. city planning history is Mel Scott, *American City Planning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 13–17. Scott wrote of and included maps and photos illustrating aspects of the Kansas City design. His summary of the impact is notable: "The whole scheme, flavored with European touches, bestowed on Kansas City an urbanity that was the envy of lesser cities in the unsophisticated midlands of America." Scott thus both praised and dismissed the effort simultaneously. See also Garvin, *The American City*, 63, for an unfavorable comparison of Kessler's Kansas City plan with H.W.S. Cleveland's Minneapolis park plan of 1883.

4. "Bid Specifications for Kansas City's Liberty Memorial," February 24, 1923, Liberty Memorial file, box 12, Kessler Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, hereafter referred to as Kessler Papers.

5. The most complete and accurate account of Henry Wright's work is in Lewis Mumford, "Henry Wright (July 2, 1878–July 9, 1936)," *Dictionary of American Biography*, 2d supp. (New York: American Council of Learned Societies, 1958): 737–39; see also "Wright, Henry," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 27 (New York: James T. White Co., 1939): 77–78.

6. For a biographical summary, see Cydney Millstein, "The Landscape Architecture Firm of Hare and Hare," excerpted in *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1993), 60–62. Hare and Hare projects are cataloged in "Hare and Hare Company Records: A Preliminary Inventory," November 1994, Western Historical Manuscript Collection–Kansas City, University of Missouri–Kansas City.

None of the Kansas City planners studied under or worked with Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. George Kessler and Olmsted did meet briefly in 1893 in Kansas City, but otherwise their contact confined itself to brief correspondence in 1882. At that time Olmsted had left New York City to set up his private practice in Brookline, Massachusetts.

The twenty-year-old Kessler, who had just spent three years taking horticulture courses and traveling about his native Germany and other parts of Europe, emigrated to New York City from Frankenhoven, Germany, at age three in 1865. The Kesslers moved in 1874 to the little railroad junction town of Dallas, Texas. Four years later, however, after Kessler's father died and his mother decided to use his inheritance to finance an education in Europe, the Kessler family returned to Germany.

Upon reentering the United States in 1882, Kessler hoped to find work with Olmsted in New York City. Failing in that, Kessler gained a reference from the landscape architect that enabled him to secure a position with Boston investor H.H. Hunnewell. Hunnewell wished to hire an industrious young man with gardening training to set up his tree plantation for railroad ties in southern Kansas. The Kansas City, Fort Scott, and Memphis Railroad also needed someone to design the grounds of the numerous new stations along its route under construction from Fort Scott, Kansas, to Memphis, Tennessee.

Kessler's connection with the Hunnewell family and the railroad continued throughout his life. He retained his consulting role on station grounds and design even though the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Memphis came under the control of the St. Louis–San Francisco Railroad in 1903. As late as 1917 he was looking after the Hunnewell tree plantation near Farlington, Crawford County, Kansas.⁷

7. H.H. Hunnewell to George Kessler, October 14, 1882, box 1, file 3, Kessler Papers; see also "Kessler, George Edward," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 20, 296–97. Kessler–Olmsted correspondence is found in the Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Letters cited occurred on the following dates: Kessler to

Although employed by the railroad, Kessler completed a number of free-lance landscape jobs from 1882 to 1892. Between 1887 and 1891 he designed subdivisions and parks for speculative real estate ventures coordinated by a conduit company for English investment money in the United States. During the real estate boom of the mid-1880s the Jarvis and Conklin Trust Company channeled money supplied by the Lands Trust investment syndicate of London into the development of the Hyde Park residential subdivision near Westport and Kansas City, Missouri, as well as into development of the Roland Park subdivision near Baltimore, Maryland, and Euclid Heights subdivision east of Cleveland, Ohio.⁸

During this period Kessler also applied for the position of landscape architect with the newly appointed Board of Park and Boulevard Commissioners of Kansas City, Missouri. However, the Missouri Supreme Court ruled the ordinance authorizing this first park board to be unconstitutional in 1891. Undaunted, park and boulevard advocates in Kansas City crafted a new ordinance the following year that provided a different board with new sources of power and revenues. This time Kessler was successful with his application although this second board hired him as "secretary and engineer" rather than with his preferred title of "landscape architect." He was fortunate, however, that he had been hired by the second park board rather than by the first. The president of the second board proved to be mining engineer and metal smelter owner August Meyer. Quite possibly as much of the initial design of the 1893 Park and Boulevard Plan of Kansas City came from

Olmsted, January 22, February 12, 18, 1882; Olmsted to Kessler, March 5, 1882; Kessler to Olmsted, March 23, April 26, October 7, 1882. Kessler to Walter Hunnewell, November 19, 1917, Catalpa Tree Plantations file 406, box 17, Kessler Papers.

8. These investments are outlined in the "Purchase Agreement by Edward Bouton of the Stock of the Roland Park Company Owned by the Lands Trust Company," July 1, 1903, Roland Park Company Records #2828, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, N.Y.; see also Kessler to Bouton, May 17, 1891, August 20, 22, 24, 1892, *ibid*.



The Sunken Gardens, photographed here in ca. 1906, are only one part of Kessler's design for The Paseo.

Meyer's fertile mind as it did from Kessler's analytical studies.⁹

Through the balance of the 1890s Kessler was largely absorbed in creating a system of parks and connecting roadways in the suddenly quiescent Kansas City. The boom of the 1880s had given way to the slow growth of the 1890s. The construction generated by the new public works projects that Meyer and Kessler had envisioned proved a boon to working-class residents as well as to more wealthy homeowners. The jobs created in clearing North Terrace Park and paving Independence Avenue became essential during the downturn of mid-decade.

Kansas City proved to be a fertile ground for another architectural mind. Henry Wright arrived there at the age of two in 1880. Much of his knowledge of landscape design came from biology courses at Kansas City's Central High School. Additionally, Wright took all the chemistry classes possible and won the Chemistry Prize for his graduating class of 1896.¹⁰ For three years fol-

lowing high school graduation, Wright worked as a draftsman for the architectural firm of Root and Siemens. With support from his father and money he had saved, Wright was able to study in the University of Pennsylvania architecture program. Upon completion of the two-year course in 1901, Wright returned to Kansas City and worked as a draftsman for the firm of Van Brunt and Howe.

Early in his career with the new architectural firm, Wright was "loaned" to landscape architect Kessler to assist in designing the St. Louis World's Fair. Originally scheduled to open in 1903, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition actually opened the following April, which gave Kessler's design team and the construction crews time to ready the site. Wright moved his family to St. Louis to oversee the project.

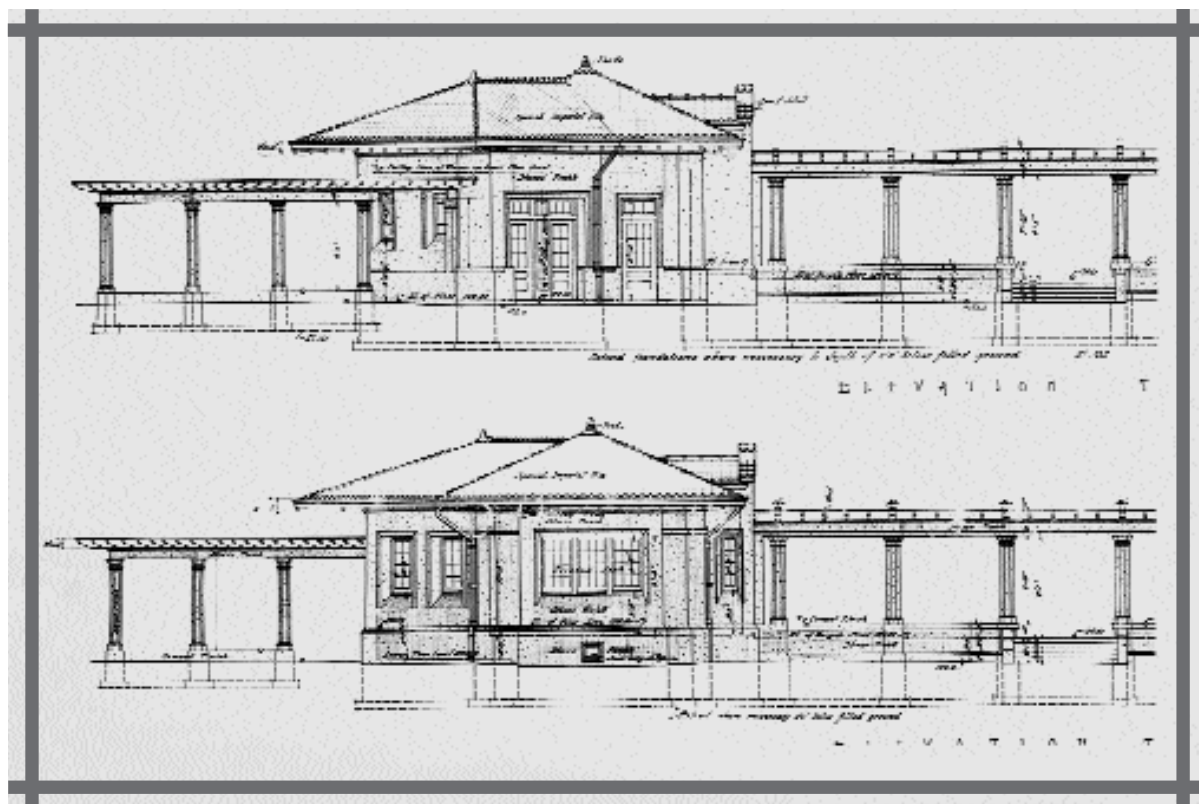
Wright's temporary job evolved into a permanent position with Kessler by the end of the fair's run. Kessler had secured the contract to redesign Forest Park in St. Louis after the fair, and he and Wright intended to capitalize on their growing reputation as park designers by attracting design contracts wher-

9. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City*; Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*, 99–125.

10. Mumford, "Henry Wright," 737–39. Wright's status as a draftsman and later student is documented through entries in Hoye's *Directory*

of *Kansas City* for the years 1897–1902; see also D.W.C. Perry to George Kessler, February 11, 1903, file 2, box 1, Kessler Papers.

This 1911 architectural drawing by George Kessler and Company is of Comfort Station at Washington Square Park, later known as Columbus Square Park in Kansas City, Missouri.



ever possible. Most of these contracts came from the plethora of new park boards created in midwestern cities during the first decade of the twentieth century. The City Beautiful movement was in full flower.¹¹

In addition to contracts in Memphis, Indianapolis, Denver, and St. Louis, Kessler, who served as lead salesman, contracted for other work in St. Louis, in East St. Louis, Illinois, and in Hutchinson, Kansas.¹² He ventured into Oklahoma Territory to explore possibilities for park design commissions in newly developing Oklahoma City, and his former residence, Dallas, contracted for a complete city plan.

Wright's role in the partnership was to design park structures, oversee actual work-in-progress, and generally follow up on Kessler's initiatives. The arrangement seems to have worked well between 1905 and 1908, but Wright had become interested in house and subdivision design in St. Louis. With Kessler's knowledge, Wright engaged in designing and constructing a speculative house in Clayton, the St. Louis suburb in which he lived. Before long, due to Wright's growing interest in housing and residen-

tial subdivision design, the partnership began to dissolve. During 1908 and early 1909 Wright had borrowed money from Kessler to invest in residential projects. Kessler requested repayment of the loan before one of the houses was sold, and a disagreement between the two men ensued in March and April 1909. In July Wright requested that he be allowed take an independent consulting assignment. Additionally, Wright and his wife had begun their family with the arrival of two children. The lifestyles of the two primary participants in Kessler's company diverged. Wright valued his family time while Kessler married late in life, fathered one son, and hardly missed a road trip in the process. In 1909 the two men parted company. While reportedly an amicable separation, Kessler's correspondence hereafter contained no references to Wright except a note from the St. Louis secretary indicating that Wright had moved to his own office in the same building.¹³

13. See George Kessler to Henry Wright, March 16, 1909, Henry Wright Papers, #2736, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, hereafter referred to as Wright Papers; Wright to Kessler, March 25, 1909, *ibid.*; Wright to Kessler, April 12, 1909, *ibid.*; Wright to Kessler, July 9, 1909, *ibid.*; unsigned interoffice memo to Kessler, August 6, 1909, *ibid.* Nothing in those papers pertains to Wright's period of employment with Kessler. Wright's career with Kessler is cov-

11. For an overview, see Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*.

12. Letterhead, July 26, 1910, Correspondence file, box 21, Kessler Papers.

At about the same time Henry Wright was preparing to move to St. Louis to work for Kessler, Sid Hare resigned his position at Forest Hill Cemetery, moved to the North Hyde Park section (3200 block of Campbell Avenue) in Kansas City, and established a landscape gardening practice. In contrast to the German-born and educated Kessler, Sid Hare gained what botanical knowledge he had from biology courses at the same Kansas City Central High School that Wright would attend a decade later. Hare derived landscaping knowledge while on the job, first as chainman and then as transitman in the city engineer's office.

Sid Hare had come into contact with Kessler during the middle 1890s as the two worked out the location and improvements needed for North Terrace Park, the intended jewel of the first park and boulevard design by Meyer and Kessler. Hare's knowledge of the terrain proved helpful as they laid out Cliff Drive and its approaches along the top of the bluff overlooking the Missouri River. Hare left the city engineer's office in 1896, some years before the design work moved into the actual construction phase. Nonetheless, the brief collaboration of Kessler and Hare stimulated the latter into his new career as cemetery superintendent and designer.

In his early years Herbert Hare attended the relatively new Manual Training High School (opened in 1897), located several blocks north on the Troost streetcar line. After high school in 1906, he apprenticed with his father until the fall of 1908. Following his apprenticeship he took a two-year course in landscape architecture from Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. at Harvard University.

The younger Hare was admitted to Harvard as a special student because he had no previous college experience. Although his studies at Manual Training High School provided an excellent technical back-

ground, his father probably supervised his liberal arts education at home before sending him to the university. While there Herbert apparently took only professional and technical courses but returned to Kansas City in 1910 without attaining a degree.¹⁴

The seminal period for this quartet personally and for the urban planning movement nationally came in 1909–1910. Kessler's removal to St. Louis in 1910 opened the door for Hare and Hare in the Kansas City region. One of this team's first planning efforts was for the Kansas City, Kansas, Parks Board. Kessler had sought this contract in 1907–1908, but when the city government changed from mayor-council to city commission, the new government abrogated Kessler's contract and sought to hire men living in the local area. Since Sid Hare had worked with land subdivision design in Kansas City, Kansas, the transfer of the planning contract to him and his son seemed appropriate. Kessler now regarded Hare's company as a competitor, and he made it clear to professional journals that he retained his relationship with the Kansas City, Missouri, Board of Park and Boulevard Commissioners.

The first national Conference on City Planning occurred in May 1909 in Washington, D.C. Chaired by Herbert Hare's mentor, Olmsted Jr., and attended by dozens of interested planners and developers, this annual conference proved to be quite important in outlining the future of the profession.¹⁵ Also in 1909 architect Daniel Burnham announced his much publicized Chicago Plan. This type of "comprehensive plan" became the basis by which all city plans would be judged in decades to come. While Kessler and the Hares produced a certain number of similar comprehensive plans, they and Wright concentrated more on

ered in the Interoffice Correspondence files, box 26, Kessler Papers, particularly D.W.C. Perry to Kessler, February 11, 1903, and interoffice memo, August 6, 1909.

14. William H. Tishler, ed., *American Landscape Architecture, Designers and Places* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1989), 126.

15. Scott, *American City Planning*, 95–100. Wright's attendance is documented in "Call for a National Conference on City Planning to be held in Washington, May 21, 22, 1909," file 434, box 17, Kessler Papers.

the design of portions of cities rather than attempting to dictate city growth as a whole.

Early in 1909 Wright reported to Kessler the various projects with which the firm was involved. They included park planning in St. Louis, East St. Louis, Kansas City (Missouri and Kansas), Denver, Indianapolis, Syracuse, Memphis, Cincinnati, and Fort Worth. Additionally, the firm continued work on St. Louis–San Francisco Railroad parks and stations and on a private country club in Birmingham, Alabama. Pending jobs awaited in Paris and El Paso, Texas; Hannibal, Missouri; and Pensacola, Florida. Kessler individually engaged himself in developing a plan for Dallas not reported by Wright.

The interoffice correspondence between Wright and Kessler, necessitated by Wright working out of St. Louis and Kessler out of Kansas City, is quite rich between 1903 and 1909. Much of it deals with questions of design and work progress on the Park and Boulevard Plan of Kansas City. Announced in 1893 but with acquisition and construction largely delayed until after 1900, Kansas City's system design proved to be the most time-consuming project of the era. It even surpassed Kessler and Wright's work on the St. Louis World's Fair and the area's return to park usage following the fair.

Among the elements of the Kansas City system under construction during the years of Kessler–Wright collaboration were:

- Admiral Boulevard from The Paseo to Independence Boulevard
- Prospect Boulevard from Independence Boulevard to North Terrace (now Kessler) Park
- The western extension of North Terrace Park from Gladstone to Maple, including the Concourse
- Gladstone Boulevard from Elmwood Avenue to Monroe Avenue
- Benton Boulevard from St. John Street to Independence Boulevard
- Grove Park
- Parade Park

- The Paseo from 17th to 27th Streets
- Holmes Square Playground and Bath House
- West Terrace Park from 6th to 17th Streets
- Karnes Boulevard
- Roanoke Park and Valentine Road
- Gillham Road from the Kansas City Terminal Railway tracks (22d Street) to The Paseo (at 46th Street)
- Harrison Boulevard
- Linwood Boulevard from Gillham Road to Troost Avenue.
- Spring Valley Park

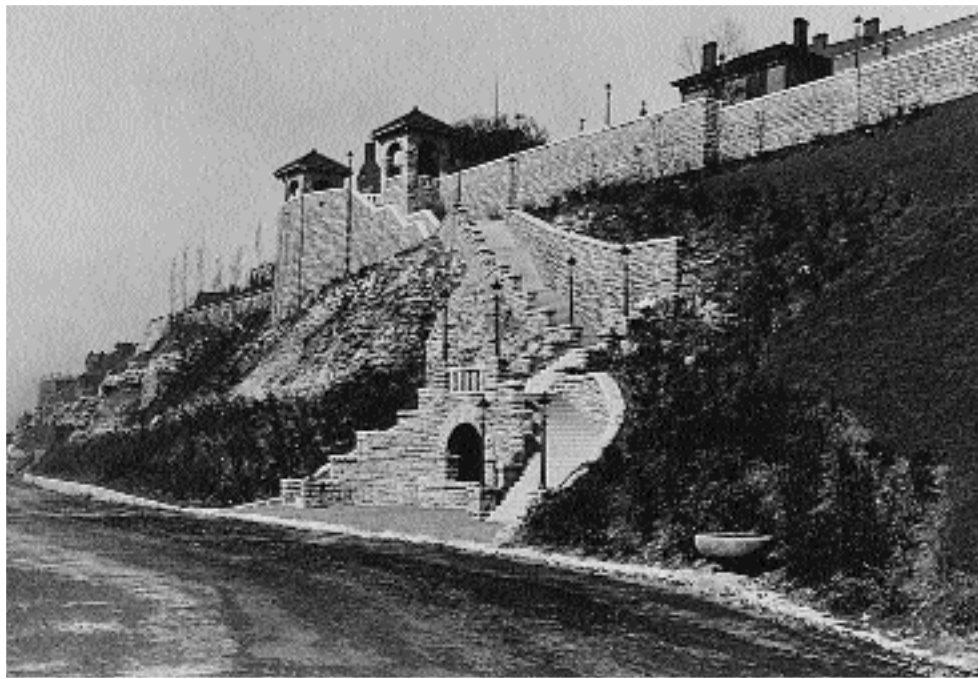
As the list indicates, the first decade of the twentieth century was a most productive period for the system. Wright did almost all of the architectural drawings for structures including the Bath House at Holmes Square, the steps and towers in West Terrace Park at Tenth Street, and improvements to the Colonnade at the Concourse at Gladstone and St. John Street.¹⁶

Kessler's 1910 letterhead listed continuing consultation work with park departments in Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Fort Worth, Memphis, Hamilton (Ohio), Syracuse, St. Louis, East St. Louis, and Kansas City (Missouri). Additionally, Kessler was the superintendent of parks, St. Louis–San Francisco Railroad; director of restoration, Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Forest Park in St. Louis; and planning consultant to Mt. Washington Cemetery and the Hugh Ward Estate, both in Kansas City, Missouri, the Claasen Company in Oklahoma City, and the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson.¹⁷

Kessler's consultation with Hugh Ward, beginning in 1907, and later with his widow, Vassie James Ward, frequently brought the landscape architect into contact with land developer J.C. Nichols. Both Nichols and Kessler worked under contract with the Wards, but Nichols did not hire Kessler to work for

16. Fred Gabelman, *Souvenir of the Park and Boulevard System of Kansas City, Missouri*, rev. ed. (N.p.: Kansas City Board of Park Commissioners, 1920).

17. Both lists come from box 26, Kessler Papers, particularly Wright to Kessler, February 26, 1909, and listing of projects under way, Kessler letterhead, July 26, 1910.



One of the many parks produced by the Kessler–Wright collaboration is West Terrace Park. The design for the steps and tower, shown in this ca. 1908 photograph, is by Henry Wright.

On another occasion Kessler confided to Nichols:

Kansas City is the only one of the cities in which my service has been taken so entirely as a matter of course that

the members of the Board and the Mayors have had the impression that my time could be placed on a par with other regularly employed city officers rendering professional services; therefore, the question of numbers of days applied in the service have apparently counted, and not the actual service rendered.²¹

Kessler may have forgotten that almost all other cities had sought him out, but in Kansas City Kessler had sought employment with the parks board. Regardless of the reasons, Kessler felt forgotten or taken for granted by Kansas Citians. This was not because St. Louis adopted Kessler's ideas more readily than did its sister city to the West. Indeed, Kessler's imprint on Kansas City is unmistakable while little evidence exists of his plans for St. Louis beyond work for the 1904 World's Fair, the reconstruction of Forest Park, and the development of Tower Grove Park. Nevertheless, Kessler apparently felt sufficiently aggrieved by the treatment he received in Kansas City that he ultimately chose a burial plot in St. Louis.²²

Given that Henry Wright spent most of his time from 1909 until 1923 in St. Louis designing subdivisions and housing plans, it is not difficult to under-

him. The Ward account did not prove to be a lucrative one for Kessler, but he listed it on his letterhead for prestige.¹⁸

For the remainder of his life Kessler kept up his midwestern contacts and involvement in city park planning. During the brief period of United States involvement in the First World War, he agreed to design housing subdivisions for the U.S. Housing Corporation near Davenport, Iowa, and Moline, Illinois, for war workers. These plans never came to fruition because of the early conclusion of the war in November 1918.¹⁹

Kessler carried on a love-hate relationship with Kansas City and its civic leadership from his 1910 removal to St. Louis until his death in 1923. On more than one occasion Kansas City political leaders informed the press that they did not intend to continue Kessler's contract. In at least one of these instances J.C. Nichols responded by meeting with Mayor James Cowgill, influential banker and politician William T. Kemper, and the rising political boss Tom Pendergast to ensure that Kessler would be retained by the new administration at his same salary.²⁰

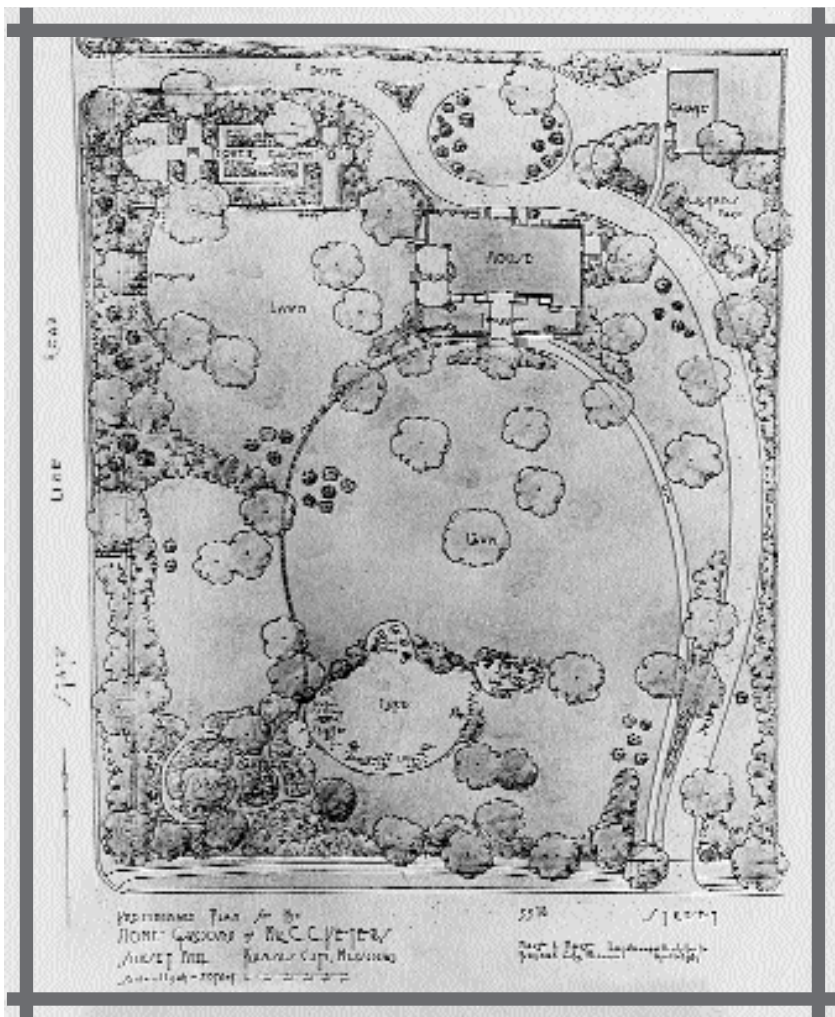
18. Ward Estate file and J.C. Nichols file, box 21, *ibid.*

19. War Cantonment file, box 16, *ibid.*

20. Nichols to Kessler, April 17, 1918, J.C. Nichols file, *ibid.*

21. Kessler to Nichols, June 13, 1917, *ibid.*

22. Edward C. Rafferty, "Orderly City, Orderly Lives: The City Beautiful Movement in St. Louis," *Gateway Heritage* 11 (Spring 1991): 40–62.



This rendering of the grounds of the C.C. Peters estate in Kansas City, Missouri, was produced in 1915 by partners Sid and Herbert Hare.

stand why he and Kessler grew apart. Kessler thrived on obtaining new consulting jobs in a wide array of midwestern and southwestern cities while Wright was interested in smaller projects close to home. This possibly resulted from Wright's growing family; Henry and Eleanor Wright had two children at the time of the separation from Kessler and a third child arrived in 1910.²³

From 1909 to 1917 Wright embarked on a subdivision planning business that provided a comfortable but not luxurious lifestyle for his family. After he left Kessler most of Wright's St. Louis work was in or near the affluent suburb of Clayton. He first designed individual houses just east of downtown Clayton next to University City, the developing suburb surrounding much of the

Washington University campus. The subdivisions he designed lie west of downtown Clayton along Big Bend Road and Wydown Boulevard. Wright also designed houses in each of these neighborhoods.²⁴

The biggest change in Wright's life seems to have resulted from his involvement in planning war housing in 1917–1918. Instead of aligning himself with the U.S. Housing Corporation as did Kessler, Wright joined planners at the Emergency Fleet Corporation, which intended to build housing for war workers near navy yards in the East. Wright also worked during the war period with Robert Kohn, who encouraged Wright to design improved housing for people of modest means.²⁵

When Wright returned to St. Louis after the war, he developed a model apartment building project in the "University Loop" of University City. On the site of a streetcar-promoted amusement park along Delmar Boulevard, Wright designed a number of apartment buildings in an unusual style for St. Louis. Instead of placing each building's narrow end facing the street, he turned the design so the buildings were only two rooms deep, front to back. This resulted in more light and improved air flow in each structure. He also provided broad islands, or parkways, in the middle of the streets to accommodate more trees and open space.

The resulting Delmar Gardens apartments, as they came to be known, provided a more attractive and potentially healthier living environment than other units in the area. Sadly, after Wright left St.

23. Allyn to Kessler, August 13, 1909, Interoffice Communications file, Kessler Papers; Ramsey to Kessler, March 31, 1910, *ibid.*

24. Esley Hamilton, *The Linden-Kingsbury District: Its History and Architecture* (St. Louis: Historical Society of University City, 1991), 9–12, 21.

25. Mumford, "Henry Wright," 738–40.

Louis in 1923 the growing demand for automobiles turned the lawn and garden spaces at the rear into garage and parking areas. Prior to Wright's involvement in the Delmar Gardens project he had no experience designing group housing. For the rest of his life, he remained greatly involved in this type of design.²⁶

From 1920 to 1923 Wright primarily worked as architectural consultant to the city planning office of St. Louis. This, too, was a change of pace. He inspected and approved or disapproved the plans and work of others rather than engaging in his own designs. In charge of the St. Louis city planning office was the "dean of scientific" city planners, Harland Bartholomew. But Wright's work from 1923 forward gave no evidence of Bartholomew's influence.²⁷

In 1923 a group of architects, planners, landscape architects, and journalists met in northern New Jersey to form the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA). Robert Kohn invited Wright to participate. Others included Clarence Stein, an up-and-coming New York architect, and the ambitious young Lewis Mumford. Henry Wright found his intellectual home at this meeting. He and Stein formed a loose architectural and planning partnership that resulted in plans for the Sunnyside apartment and house development in Queens (1924); plans for Radburn, a cooperative housing venture with an unusual site plan just north of Newark, New Jersey (1928); and plans for Chatham Village housing project in Pittsburgh (1930).²⁸ Without question, Wright's best-known work is the Radburn design.

Stein and Wright separated in 1931, largely because Stein resented Wright's idealistic approach that left details of design and construction to Stein and others. From that point until his death in 1936, Wright

engaged in a more academic career, teaching at Columbia University and writing a book outlining his ideas about the future of U.S. housing policy.

Lewis Mumford later summed up Wright's ideas after he had joined the RPAA movement:

From 1923 on he persistently attacked the sterile character of the zoning movement with its tendency toward class segregation and architectural monotony, to the discomfiture of many of his fellow members in the American Institute of Planners; and while an advocate of the individual house, when imaginatively planned in groups, he denounced the risks and burdens that the "own your own home" movement then imposed on the lower income groups.²⁹

Obviously Wright's ideal as he moved into the housing discussion of the 1930s did not agree with that of J.C. Nichols and other private developers waiting out the Great Depression. In the long term, Nichols's ideas proved the more resilient, even if Wright's seem more unselfish.

As Wright was drawing his architectural path, Sid and Herbert Hare were busy establishing their new firm. After 1902 Sid concentrated on designing cemeteries and landscapes for private investors and home builders. By 1910 Sid had completed cemetery plans for locations in Kansas City, Neosho, and Carthage, Missouri; Salem, Ohio; Knoxville, Tennessee; Birmingham, Alabama; Omaha, Nebraska; and San Antonio, Texas. In addition, Sid Hare designed the grounds for the Odd Fellows Home in Liberty, Missouri, and a park plan for Springfield, Missouri.³⁰

After this point the Hares expanded their park planning efforts. In 1911 the team secured a commission for designing Fort Defiance Park in Tacoma, Washington, while work continued on the Springfield, Missouri, system. The Hares also increased

26. Comments about apartment styles are based on personal observations by the author, February 1996; see also Esley Hamilton, *The Linden-Kingsbury District*, 9–10.

27. On Harland Bartholomew, see E.F. Porter, *Harland Bartholomew* (St. Louis: St. Louis Public Library and Landmarks Association of St. Louis, 1990). Regarding Wright's outside commission work, see "First Annual Report to the Shareholders of Associated Specialists, Inc., for Year 1924," Wright Papers.

28. Henry Wright, "Personal Blurb," Wright Papers.

29. Mumford, "Henry Wright," 739.

30. "Hare and Hare Company Records: A Preliminary Inventory."

their private landscape design commission work and maintained a significant level of cemetery design work until Sid's declining participation in the partnership in the mid-1930s.

In 1913 J.C. Nichols established a working relationship with Herbert Hare that continued unbroken until the hiatus caused by the Great Depression. Resuming their connection after World War II, Herbert Hare completed additional Nichols contracts until Hare's death. Hare always considered his Mission Hills designs for Nichols among his best work in land subdivision. Without question, in the Kansas City area, the use of the irregular terrain to shape streets and lots works better in Mission Hills than at any other site.³¹

Given that the origins of the Hare firm involved taking the planning contract for the Kansas City, Kansas, parks and boulevards from Kessler, it is not surprising that little contact ensued between the two firms for several years. Indications of warming relations came in 1917 when Kessler asked Herbert Hare to work with him on the planned war worker housing in three of the Quad Cities (Moline and Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa). While this project never went beyond initial planning, the correspondence between Herbert Hare and Kessler increased after this time.³²

In 1921 Herbert Hare received a commission for planning at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. He asked Kessler to consult with him on the plan. Apparently the university chancellor specifically wanted Kessler to approve Hare's suggestions before he submitted them to the university.³³ The following year the Hare firm received its most ambitious con-

tract to date: planning a new town. The Kansas City-based Long-Bell Lumber Company was moving much of its logging operation to the Pacific Northwest. Long-Bell majority stockholder Robert A. Long wanted to build a model community, Longview, for his workers at the point where the Cowlitz River flowed into the Columbia. He contracted with Hare and Hare to do the planning but asked Kessler and J.C. Nichols to serve as consultants.³⁴

The Longview plan called for starting a new town from the ground up. Long was not able to see the plan through to the level envisioned by the Hares, Kessler, and Nichols. Kessler died on March 19, 1923, without providing much insight on the Longview project. As a result, Longview grew almost entirely from the planning of Herbert Hare, which he used for the rest of his career to advertise his planning skills.³⁵

Question has arisen as to whether Kessler "handed off" his practice at his death to the Hares or if they simply picked up certain of the pieces.³⁶ Evidence in the Hare company papers proves, however, that the latter took place. One of Herbert Hare's biggest city planning efforts was a long-term contract with the City of Houston. Correspondence demonstrates that city officials sought him out after Kessler's death.³⁷

Hare and Hare's third major project, after Mission Hills and Longview, was the landscape planning for Kansas City's premier art museum—the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Built from the proceeds and earnings of two separate bequests to the city, the Nelson-Atkins benefited considerably from the timing of the funding's availability. The estates of newspaper publisher William Rockhill Nelson and his family were not finalized until the onset of the Great Depression. By combining the Nelson funds with a bequest from lit-

31. Ibid.

32. Kessler to Hare, June 17, 1917, box 8, Kessler Papers; Hare to Kessler, June 8, 1921, *ibid.*

33. S. Herbert Hare, "The Planning of the Industrial City of Longview, Washington," box 212, Hare and Hare Company Records, Western Historical Manuscript Collection—Kansas City, hereafter referred to as Hare and Hare Company Records; *see also* S. Herbert Hare, "American Small Towns II—Longview, Washington," box 154, *ibid.*

34. Ibid.

35. "Hare and Hare Company Records: a Preliminary Inventory."

36. David Boutros, director, Western Historical Manuscript Collection—Kansas City, interview by author, April 1996.

37. Houston City Plan file, box 119, Hare and Hare Company Records.

The design of picturesque Gillham Road at Thirty-ninth Street is the work of George Kessler and Henry Wright.




tle-known Mary Atkins, the museum trustees authorized construction of a great neoclassical structure. In the early 1930s

Herbert Hare and his staff developed a grounds plan to highlight the setting and features of the building.³⁸

In the post-World War II era Herbert Hare led his firm in the direction of city and park planning much in the tradition of George Kessler. This provided great continuity in the Kessler approach for Kansas City, Missouri, and for cities and towns across the Midwest and Southwest who came to rely on Hare and Hare. Herbert Hare became George Kessler's true successor even though he worked on relatively few projects with Kessler. In contrast, Henry Wright worked six years with Kessler. Although it is clear from his later work in subdivisions and in multifamily site planning that he gained much from his connection with Kessler, Wright seldom mentioned his background to new colleagues in the East after moving there in the 1920s. Possibly he felt he had been wronged in the breakup with Kessler in 1909.³⁹

38. Nelson Gallery file, box 63, *ibid.*

39. Henry Wright Personal file, box 1, Wright Papers; Henry N. Churchill, "Henry Wright, 1878–1936," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 26 (November 1960): 293–301. Churchill and Wright worked on

Kessler's theme of planning—obtaining city beautification, order, and public health—continued in the work of former rival Herbert Hare.⁴⁰ Kessler's only real protegee, Henry Wright, developed a variation of that theme so different that it hardly can be recognized in places such as Radburn, New Jersey. Nonetheless, George Kessler's basic concepts worked their way into both planning practice and the professional literature through two divergent offspring—Henry Wright and Herbert Hare. 

the stillborn depression project of planning Greenbrook, New Jersey. This was part of the effort that resulted in planning and constructing Greenbelt, Maryland, under the direction of Guy Rexford Tugwell in the Resettlement Administration of the Department of Agriculture. Churchill stated flatly in 1960 that "Wright came from St. Louis" and made no mention of Kessler. The only mention of the Kessler connection in Lewis Mumford's 1958 biographical note came with the erroneous connection of Kessler as an employee of Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. Mumford stated that "Through Kessler, who had worked for Frederick Law Olmsted, Wright came under the influence of one of the few seminal minds in planning that the nineteenth century had produced, and his own community plans establish him as perhaps Olmsted's most adept continuator."

40. George Kessler, "City Planning and Its Commercial Value," speech given before the City Club, St. Louis, March 27, 1914, box 3, Kessler Papers.