



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

**The Pioneer Mother Group**  
Kansas City, Missouri, November 11, 1927

Lest the West forget, in its engrossment in commercial activity, in its mere selfish enjoyment of life, – this Memorial to the pioneer mother is given to this Western Empire – dedicated to the hardship, the agonized toil, the courage, the devotion of the mothers who caused our part of America to be.

The Pioneer Group was conceived in love for a mother – the mother of Mr. Howard Vanderslice – typifying those courageous pioneer women who, with devotion to their sturdy husbands, fought their way to a new and unknown country, by a hazardous river and a lonely trail, to carve a new home in the wilderness, to conquer the prairie and the forest, to rear families of patriotic Americans and burn a desolate land into a prosperous region. No sacrifice too severe; no danger to life itself too great; no hardship too appalling, to withstand the instinct for home, and the inspired zeal for conquest.

Does Kansas City and the West forget – surrounded by pleasure, wealth and luxury?

Are we unmindful of the sacrifice of those noble women?

Does satiation by every pleasure of the hour, the gratification of every desire; so dim our human impulse to serve mankind, that we fail to serve our time, as those women of hallowed memory, in past generations, faced the almost insurmountable difficulties, in blazing the trail into the heart of the American continent?

Shall we deliver unto our children, and future generations, a heritage of worth?

Shall we continue to pile riches upon riches, and only spread the glory of our industry and our commerce?

Or, shall we, too, build real monuments of service and sacrifice, to show our love and reverence for our fellow-men.

This Memorial, which we deliver today unto you, Mr. Mayor, representing our splendid city, shall stand eternally as a beacon light, not only to remind us of our debt to our pioneer mothers, but an ennobling inspiration to greater deeds for humanity. It will truly mark our remembrance of how we came to be.

We place it in the Great Outdoors, God's Museum, a serene and lovely enshrinement of early pioneer spirit. It is set apart upon a lonely hill, above the busy, humming of our city, yet within the reach of all who revere the noble sentiment embodied in its bronze – an entrancing sermon to all who may come. It is historically true to its period.

May it inspire better lives in our people, stir the finer emotions of the great West. Solemn, prayer-like in its purity, it does not belong alone to the ages of the past. It will live in constant, ceaseless, daily contact with an achieving people. Soul-stirring in poetic, rhythmic idealism, it will ever touch the hearts, and enthrall the motives of a people with a growing and deepening gratitude.

This statute, placed on its beautiful granite base, embodying the best talent and four years toil of a great sculptor, Mr. A. Phumster Proctor, and expressing the inward soul of a citizen who does not forget the toil and courageous sacrifice of our mothers, will go far to crush out the grosser motives of our time.

It is a democratic appeal to all – to the youngest child, as well as the oldest parent.

Forbidding doors will never close upon this Pioneer Group. In sunlight and in shadow, in storm and in calm, in calamity and prosperity it will forever send its message far and wide.

Amid the bright, autumn colors of the forest trees in this beautiful park, and amid the lovely and refreshing flowers of spring, it will teach its lesson.

Shall we keep our faith. If we read the story expressed in this Memorial, we will love flowers, music, pictures, our city, our people, and perform good deeds and inspire good living.

We nestle and cradle in beauty this expression of our gratefulness and love for the mothers who have gone.

May this be our sacred pledge to future generations – that we shall never fail to carry over the top, as our boys in the Great War, the ending of which we commemorate today, fought for the splendid principles underlying the American Republic.

May this Memorial mark the dawn of a new Era in the building of our city. May it lead to the achievement of the noblest purposes in life. May it stand for centuries as a guiding star of greater human achievement.

This Pioneer Group will need no guard or custodian other than the hearts of our people. Its lesson will enrich our city. May it lead to many other noble expressions in marble and bronze upon appropriate sites throughout our community. May it lead to nobler executions in architecture and landscape art. May it inspire a more orderly and beautiful city. Let its lesson lead to a great diagram of a future well planned city, so great and so beautiful that it will stir the souls of our people, to achievement as yet undreamed, and undared.

A compatriot of the Indian Scout on yonder hill. A fitting companion of our great War Memorial to the north, for our five hundred boys who gave their lives because they did not forget their mother's teachings.

Let us pray that its divine lesson will tell our pioneers of today that their good deeds, too, will not be forgotten.

This Memorial tells the same world-old story, as recorded in the history of all nations, that only service to humanity is eternally remembered.

So to you Mr. Mayor for Mr. Howard Vanderslice, we give this Memorial to our lovely city – which we know will guard it tenderly and affectionately, throughout the generations to come.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN017

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- ), 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 (KC106) 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.