



Planning for Permanence: the Speeches of J.C. Nichols
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Country Side Homes Association

Kansas City, Missouri April 16, 1935

The property owners in the territory governed by the COUNTRY SIDE HOMES ASSOCIATION should be particularly pleased by their surroundings. The beautiful eighty-acre park given to the city by Mrs. J.L. Loose in memory of her husband joins you on the west. Brookside Boulevard with its accompanying parkway land extends through the entire east portion of your territory, and the Public Service Company have their wire one hundred foot right-of-way for the street car line which has been beautified by the Nichols' Company so as to give an additional park like effect to this valley. The new University of Kansas City has acquired a large campus as a magnificent gift from William Volker just to the northeast of your section. The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Atkins Museum of Fine Arts with its beautiful grounds comprising twenty acres, lies just to the north of the University grounds. The rapidly growing Kansas City Art institute with its rare trees and shrubs collected by the late A.P. Meyer from all parts of the country, adjoins the Art Gallery grounds. East of you, you have the splendid W. R. Nelson elementary school. A short distance south is the Southwest High School to which nine additional classrooms are now being added, and which is rapidly becoming the largest high school in the city.

In the valley along Brookside Boulevard is that delightful and beautiful group of Crestwood Shops. The buildings are exquisite in color and the colonial design harmonize completely with the neighborhood; free from any garish or offensive signs of any character, and occupied by a group of willing, conscientious merchants supplying your daily needs. They are there to serve you, and they deserve your patronage. The Homes Association tax is paid upon the land occupied by these shops, and the Crestwood Merchants Association is co-operating in every way with the officers of your association.

Across the street from these shops you have one of the finest Presbyterian churches in the city. At 52nd and Main Street you have a splendid Catholic Church, The Central Methodist Episcopal Church South has acquired a large tract of land just north of 52nd Street lying between the carline and Oak Street where they plan to erect a magnificent new church of residential type and surrounded by a large lawn space.

A short distance to the north of your territory is located the Country Club Plaza which is universally conceded to be America's finest suburban shopping center.

County Side abounds with beautiful homes and lawns- five hundred families who have a vital interest in the District. While this section was started nearly a quarter of a century ago by our company, I am proud to say that it is still a desirable residential center. It is an absolute challenge to the rise and fall of residential districts. A few years

ago, twenty years was considered the maximum life of any good residential area. I see no reason why your section should not still be a highly desirable place to live twenty-five to fifty years from today. While the land owned by our company in this district has long since been sold, we still feel a very great interest in the preservation of its high-class character.

Certainly all of this is in miraculous contrast with the condition of the land as we found it a quarter of a century ago. At that time there was an old hog feeding lot at 57th and Brookside; and old cider mill at 57th and Wornall Road; The Hornbuckle dairy at 54th and Main Streets with 140 cows; a Negro park commonly known as "Razor Park" at 52nd and Brookside; an old quarry at 51st and Main; an old dirt road extending from the iron bridge over Brush Creek on Main Street south along the farms. All of these have long since disappeared. Even the remains of the old polo field around 54th and Main streets where many gay festival events took place, is gone and hardly a vestige of its former location is to be found. Great masses of refuse and rubbish had made this section a vast dumping ground while it was still beyond the city limits. But today the Country Side Homes Association territory comprises one of the finest groups of homes and contented owners that you can find any place in the United States.

Let's watch out for the little things that eventually turn a residential district toward a decline; let's not allow incipient decay to enter into this region. Let's enforce restrictions vigorously.

There are a few things in your territory today which are creating an adverse effect to your property values. There is much broken curb which, built many years before the days of heavy trucks, has not been able to withstand such traffic. Also there are some driveways that need repairs or replacement; in some places there are ugly gashes which have been cut into lawns by drivers getting off of the driveways, and which present ugly eye sores. There are places where owners park on the grass of the parking making a very bad appearance on the entire neighborhood. Just a few little things such as this can be overcome and in my judgment their repair will add at least half a million dollars to the value of the property in your territory. They will not only add selling value but will add much to the joy and pleasure of living in this section.

I hope that one of the objectives of your Board of Directors this coming year will be to gradually overcome these few unsightly things in your District so that through the years we can proudly say that the Country Side Homes Association, the pioneer association of the Country Club District, the world's greatest subdivision, still maintains its value and still through all the years is one of the most desirable places in which to live in all of Kansas City.

You have been fortunate in having a fine, interested group of men serving as your Board of Directors – continue to give them your support. The small assessment you pay to their activities is worth many times its cost. I am sure that none of you have any conception of the multitude of little services rendered by your Board through the year to further the improvement and conveniences of your section.

This section is the place of your home, where you are rearing your family, it represents your greatest interest in your entire life. Let's all band together and work

together to make it not only a more pleasant place in which to live, but a greater and greater asset to Kansas City, the city we all love so much.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN031

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.