



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

Progress of The Plaza in 1946-1947

Plaza Association February 10, 1947

NEW TENANTS PLAZA HALL BUILDING – 1946

BARNEY'S – 3 times – 12 times.

GAS COMPANY – 40% increase basement, and first floor level raised ... model kitchen ... expanded cooking school ... 3,000 women a month.

ZIDE GIFTS – double space and basement.

C.M. WATKINS – 35% increase ... improved prescription department, large increase dining space ... greatly improved basement space.

MARY BROOKE – 40% increase first floor and basement . . . many thousand dollars additional equipment.

MUEHLEBACH GROCERY – beautifully redecorated.

SECOND FLOOR PLAZA HALL BUILDING

BLACK & VEATCH – 625 ft. newly built additional space on rear, on second floor.

WEST END OF BUILDING over Barney's, JACK HOFFMAN AND DON PATTERSON attorneys much needed in Plaza. Same suite Brundred Oil Company. Carl Lawson Advertising Agency increased space.

PLAZA ESPLANADE BUILDING

KROGER CASH AND CARRY GROCERY – 3 times former space – air-cooled. Finest in Kansas City. Lot new customers.

Entrance parking station east of Esplanade Building, six 16th century Italian marble columns for which Hearst paid \$18,000, and two 200 year old marble lions from Italy ... most beautiful parking entrance in world ... adjoining parking station. Entrance to Terrace Shops to be occupied on lower level under Parking Station by cafeteria with largest seating capacity in Kansas City.

Basement under Kroger – C.S. Pitrat's shop, and maintenance headquarters for 35 workmen.

421-9 ALAMEDA ROAD BUILDING

BO SING – 1 1/2 times space, including 800 ft. taken off rear Ward Parkway garage with splendid new modern kitchen.

HOBBY CRAFT SHOP – Monk Baird, and Bob Whitmer, including former space occupied by Bowser Pump Company with 800 ft. off rear Ward Parkway Garage for their repair shop and display room, also with courtesy of George Welsh.

SPECTOR BROS. – took over Taylor’s Restaurant at Ward Parkway and Penn.

WARD PARKWAY BUILDING

LEE TOLLE and M.C. BEAMER – new Wymore Hardware location ... 2 1/2 times former space ... planning large sales space in basement for house equipment.

JOHN LIESVELDT – some three times former space in Senate Building on Armour Boulevard ... one of the most beautiful florist shops in America. Splendid use of basement.

BALCONY BUILDING

KIRKLAND LUGGAGE SHOP AND TRAVEL BUREAU – certainly finest in Kansas City.

BILL WIMER – former Zide space added to his room gives him double seating capacity.

GEORGE CHRISTMAN and WALT VOGEL with that fine new athletic goods shop in the former Insul Wool location.

SECOND FLOOR BALCONY BUILDING

Space formerly occupied by Huff Secretarial School, now occupied by the following new doctors in Plaza ... all men who are top in their profession:

F.A. Carmichael, Sr., neurologist

F.A. Carmichael, Jr., brain

Kenneth E. Cox. Obstetrics.

R.E. Meness, dentist

Carl Bryant Schutz, surgeon

William F. Kuhn, II, surgeon

James H. Dangle, internal medicine

C.E. Virden, X-ray

Kenneth C. Hollweg, X-ray

Victor B. Buhler, pathologist

This space is now divided up into some 40 rooms with some of the finest X-ray and pathologist equipment to be found any place.

At the top of the stairway the hallway has been adorned with two lovely stone columns; fine, brilliantly colored, framed Mexican pictures have been placed on the walls.

DRS. WEBB AND SHOFSTALL space has been practically doubled in size, and the Balcony Bldg. emergency hospital with several beds has been provided.

On the first floor of the Balcony Building, Steve's Shoes has added a fine shoe repair department, and his space was extended six feet into the areaway in the rear.

PLAZA THEATER BUILDING – SECOND FLOOR

GEORGE W. TOURTELLOT, III, has established an agency for High-Lite, Inc., advertising photographers, and HERBERT F. VERG has opened an office for wholesale schoolbooks. Also provided more office space for Virginia Farrar.

47TH STREET SIDE OF THEATER BUILDING

Former Caddo River space was remodeled for following doctors:

J.W. Hallberg, general medicine.

Hugh G. Hamilton, obstetrics

Edgar W. Johnson, Jr., General medicine

N. Eugene Lacy, general medicine

Richard Schuts, general medicine

Lawrence Woods, general medicine.

TRIANGLE BUILDING

JUD AND VIRGINIA PUTSCH in April purchased Clair Martin's complete establishment, and immediately remodeled the kitchen with very fine equipment ... tile walls ... complete air conditioning, perhaps equaling or surpassing any kitchen in Kansas City.

Also remodeled the El Sombrero room in the basement; air-cooled it; provided indirect lighting, and it will be further beautified with an entire new and attractive stairway ... they hope to have constant daily luncheon and evening affairs in this private dining room which can seat up to 60 or 65 people ... this facility in addition to Watson Green's private dining room for somewhat smaller groups will supply much needed addition to the Plaza, and we should all encourage use of them. Of course, this very beautiful dining room in which we are meeting today is a great asset to the Plaza for larger luncheons and dinners.

MILLCREEK BUILDING

PAUL OWEN – completely revamped and effectively re-arranged their additional basement space ... provided storage, and Paul Owen's main office.

FAIRFAX STORAGE – Second Floor – Greatly enlarged their space.

BOB NELSON – I forgot to mention when I was talking about the TRIANGLE BUILDING that Bob Nelson has put in air-cooling in his beautiful shop and completely re-fixture it.

FLYNN RACKET SHOP just south of Chandler's was practically doubled in size during the year.

PROGRAM FOR 1947

We hope to be able to get Government consent to erect a two story building with basement on the parking lot just south of Barney, and plan to put a large gold colored dome on it ... this to complete the composite picture of beauty pulling together the magnificent tower now being erected at Ward Parkway and Wornall Road, and which is 30 feet higher than any other tower in the Plaza ... the striking turret – 18 ft. high – to be built above corner of Jack Henry's new space ... the Terrace Shops entrance to the new cafeteria ... and the Esplanade Building ... all tying together both architecturally and in striking color, into a complete whole in an almost sensational manner.

The completion of the cafeteria in the Terrace Shops ... this space will also include some 25 or 30% of the space under the Kroger Grocery Store ... and if present plans are completed it will be the largest and certainly most interesting cafeteria in Kansas City, and will help take care of the greatly increased dining capacity demand that will confront us during the year 1947.

DEWEY PORTLAND CEMENT COMPANY has just moved from the J.C. Nichols Building into the second floor of the Plaza Esplanade Building ... they have decorated their walls in their office with large interesting maps.

MAURICE is today developing a beauty parlor to the west side of the Esplanade corridor, three times his present space, and with a wonderful layout.

Space will be available in this building for several other present Plaza tenants, and we are turning down dozens of newcomers in order to take care of the expansion of our present tenants.

The Esplanade corridor will sing with beauty and interest ... six, 200 year old carved wooden Spanish gargoyles ... some 300 year old terra cotta bust of a lady of the Della Robbia school just set up at the top of the stairway ... an Italian white marble statue stands in a lighted niche at the turn of the corridor ... across from her is placed two illuminated French alabaster vases with an Italian marble bench between, and a 19th century Capodimonte plaque displayed on the wall ... Many striking Mexican framed pictures have been placed on the walls, and it is hoped we can work out a plan that the north doorway in this singing corridor, will be within a step or two of the second deck of the parking station lying between the Esplanade Building and the Plaza Bowl and 47th Street, at least doubling the capacity of parking in that area.

NEWMAN & PITTELL are putting a delicatessen and bakery in the old riding academy building, including space for serving quick sandwich luncheons ... quite an area to the rear of their food space is being added for cooling equipment and kitchens.

SHIPLEY WALLPAPER COMPANY will soon move from their present space in the Nichols Building to the space which Postal Life is graciously giving up just west of the post office. This will give Shipley about two and a half times his present space ... He is planning to put in air cooling and make it a beautiful, efficient shop.

GEORGE WELSH is planning very extensive remodeling, making a beautiful display room for his Ford cars ... air cooling that particular area ... making considerable effective change in the front of his building, greatly enhancing that whole block.

In the building as yet un-named, and the prizes as yet unpaid, on Wornall Road from Ward Parkway to Alameda Road in the Ward Parkway corner, the Power & Light Company will go into nearly three times their former space, and they are planning perhaps to have a wonderful mural on their north wall eight feet high and seventy-five feet long, and assure us it is going to be a most striking presentation of the history of electricity. Don't forget they have 10,000 persons a month personally visit their Plaza store to pay bills.

A tenant as yet unannounced will occupy 20 x 112 ft. to the north of the Power & light Company, and Jack Henry, our great merchant prince, will move into three and a half times his present space, which is thirty-four times the space he started with some sixteen years ago. Let me predict his store will be more beautiful and efficient than anything in Kansas City ... some say even in the entire United States.

On the second floor of this building, plans are rapidly progressing for some forty to fifty physicians' and dentists' suites. This large area will be divided into some 100 little rooms ... Special effort is being made to procure lines of dentistry and medicine not yet completely represented in the Plaza, and, of course, very top men.

The corridor in this building will also be beautified almost beyond human comprehension ... 3 large vans of objects of art are now enroute to Kansas City from Rhode Island and Massachusetts to adorn this hall and other future halls and future spots in the Plaza. I just purchased all the objects on two large estates that are being dismantled in the east, altogether comprising nearly 100 items. Of course, many of them will be placed in parks throughout the Country Club District.

I forgot to mention that during the year we hope to provide more space for the Hobby craft shop to take care of their greatly growing needs ... perhaps in the basement under the post office.

In THE NICHOLS BUILDING we hope to be able to move Twogood's art shop to the space now occupied by Shipley, and then add Twogood's space to John and Watkins to help meet their very urgent demand, and to provide more eating facilities.

The space formerly occupied by the Dewey Portland Cement Company in the Nichols Building is all being added to the J.C. Nichols Company office to expand Miller Nichols' sales department; Ed Tanner's architectural department; Raidt's auditing department; and to bring Ansel Mitchell's construction department down from the little building they have been occupying at Meyer Circle. The Plaza Association office will be moved from the basement to the second floor.

The Homes Association office in the basement, in the next few days, will move to a new part of the basement, and just this morning we provided Black & Veatch's expanded needs of more area for their draftsmen, and within a few weeks we plan to provide them some 1,600 ft. of space in our basement ... all air-cooled and with excellent lighting ... extending under all of our first floor office; under Mrs. McGavran's beauty shop, and the front part of the present Shipley space.

PLAZA MEDICAL BUILDING

MRS. WALDMAN AND YOUNG BILL will move Jay's dress shop into all of the present Jack Henry space and the Lerner space, removing the wall between these two

rooms, building two new doorway entrances, and with a fixture layout that is going to be a knockout. Our architectural department has been working days and nights on their plans, and in looking over them this morning I was perfectly thrilled. This will give Jay's 2.6 times their present space, and between four and five times the space they started with us only a few years ago.

BALCONY BUILDING

DAN INDIN will probably add the present Power and Light room just west of him, and still retain his present space. I hope to satisfy BREWER the tailor to move to the second floor of the Esplanade Building, and then by giving the present Maurice space, the Brewer space, and half of Dan Indin's room to Lerner, and enclosing the areaway in the rear of these three rooms, he will have about half again as much space as he now has, and will greatly step up the merchandising pulling power for that area.

BALCONY BUILDING – Second Floor

We are moving Don Wilson, public accountant, at considerable hardship to our company, to the second floor of the Millcreek Building in order to provide much needed space for Dr. Shofstall ... we hope gradually to convert the entire second floor of the Balcony Building for doctors and have just recently completed a parking station to the rear of this building for 18 cars, and it cost us a lot of money.

JUD AND VIRGINIA PUTSCH, as you know, are spending almost all the money in the world in remodeling all their space, except the present cafeteria ... their main dining-room will be of a New Orleans character and atmosphere ... one of their bars is being removed, and they are developing a cocktail lounge second to none ... I admire their courage and appreciation of the beautiful, and their whole new layout is going to be a wonderful asset to the Plaza ... They did not take very long to get into the expanding spirit of the Plaza.

When Pete gets his new maintenance headquarters in the basement of the Esplanade Building we shall have additional basement space to provide for Nancy Foster's House of Beauty, and Paul Owen's Stork's Nest in the basement of the Millcreek Building.

THEATER BUILDING

More than a year ago we made up our minds that it was unwise to have large office organizations with so many all-day parked cars of employees, and we asked our good friend Leo Barry of the Phillips Petroleum Company to endeavor to find quarters elsewhere. They purchased a building on 39th Street and are now remodeling it, and within two or three months that space will be available for adding new area for physicians and dentists, or expanding the merchants below it, upstairs. It is no secret that Louis Rothschild is very desirous of doubling his space by going upstairs, and Krese also wants to double their space ... I wish I could figure out some way that we could add much needed space for Bill Schoenhardt ... Miss Brentnall, and Fred Gabelman's B & G ... all of whom are constantly after us for more space.

We have been conducting studies as to how we can expand the space of Mindlin ... If the structure will carry the load, we may add a third floor over part of his present space in order to move his alteration department to the third floor, and Harold may install

an elevator ... we are trying to shift some tenants just west of their present space on the 47th Street side on the second floor to the Theater Building so as to add some 1,500 ft. to their space, which will involve our spending many thousands of dollars for moving the toilets and rebuilding that whole area.

In the Millcreek Building this year we have doubled the space of Harvey Rush's space, and gave his old space to C.P. Davis Insurance Company ... Also we have put Ben Hyde Jr., and A.J. Stormfelz, oil producers into the Millcreek Building on the second floor, and the National Lubricating Grease Institute, with Carl Bolte, has taken over space formerly occupied by Postal Life.

Since the first of the year, Robert Lee Strom has taken over the Plaza Shoe Repair Shop on Alameda Road.

When JAY'S vacate their present space we hope to give BENNETT SCHNEIDER about half again as much space – commercial stationer and office equipment; provide the BANK some very much needed space, and take care of MANNIE LUX'S expanding needs. But it is certainly a headache to work it all out with our very limited amount of area.

CALDWELL OPTOMETRIST SHOP on Central may take over the cleaning and dyers establishment adjoining.

It is possible that the CALDWELL OPTOMETRIST SHOP on ALAMEDA ROAD may move to the second floor of the ESPLANADE BUILDING.

WATSON GREEN needs more space but we have not been able as yet to work it out for him.

STOVER is begging us for more space.

On the second floor of the PLAZA THEATER BUILDING we are trying our best to provide space for a few more doctors and dentists, which may call for considerable rearrangement of hallways.

I forgot to mention that BILL WARBURTON is after me every day for more space for KRESGE. He is almost as bad as BILL SCHOENHARD.

I think you all know we have planned to ultimately build shops on the vacant space in the CHANDLER BLOCK.

Miss SWANSON wants her space increased by 50%.

We may temporarily put in parking station for 44 EMPLOYEES on some of the vacant land now being used by CHANDLERS NURSERY STOCK.

Also, before I forget it, I am sure you must all appreciate that we spent over \$5,000 this year going through a six-foot ledge of rock, putting in a high retaining wall at the rear, providing employee's parking space for 32 cars on WORNALL ROAD across from the TRIANGLE BUILDING.

Also, during 1946 we built a Parking station on the north side of 47th between the Morning-Glow and Penn Marshall apartments, providing for 32 all day parked employees' cars.

I am trying my best to work out more space for FRANCES WELCH and VIRGINIA FARRAR in 1947.

Also, I am sure you will not forget that during the year we put up that beautiful 17th century Italian plaque in the TRIANGLE in front of the THEATER. It is from the old HARDING HOME on FIFTH AVENUE in NEW YORK and originally sold for some \$12,500.

We also put up the 17th century porcelain SPANISH DUKE over JUD PUTSCH'S door.

We added another old antique ITALIAN WELL HEAD north of MAURICE WATKINS.

We put up a beautiful Italian VERONA MARBLE VASE across from JOHN WATKINS, which is now in the shop being repaired as a result of vandalism.

We also added those two STONE HERMES FIGURES at the south exit of the PLAZA THEATER.

We also put a WROUGHT IRON TOP on the WELL HEAD in the triangular park in front of Paul Greenwood's shop.

We also have two very beautiful white marble, carved vases, the finest I have ever seen – good enough to go in any art collection in the country – One will go in front of JACK HENRY'S new store, and one in front of the DOME BUILDING to be built on ALAMEDA to the north of Jack.

I have many other places listed for future objects of art, many of which I hope to get up during the year 1947.

I am sure all of you recall that we COMPLETELY REBUILT the 47th Street Sidewalk in front of the TRIANGLE BUILDING; also in front of the BALCONY BUILDING; and a large part of the sidewalk in front of the PLAZA HALL BUILDING.

I could give you a long list of other tenants wanting more space:

Gerhardt, the furrier

Findlay Galleries

Cricket West

Robinson Shoe Store

Paul Greenwood

Bob Nelson

George Christman and Walt Vogel

Bess Joyce, Girl's Shop

Swyden

and many others.

I forgot to call to your attention the fact that in 1946, FRED WOLFERMAN increased his fine BALCONY LUNCH ROOM by some 50%. It is a great help at noontime in the Plaza.

We hope about February 1st the KEITH FURNITURE COMPANY will open their wonderful Plaza store with a series of shops: LINEN, CHINA, SILVER, PICNIC SUPPLIES, DRAPERIES, FURNITURE, GIFTS, ETC. They have expended some \$90,000 revamping the whole interior of their two floors, I PREDICT THAT IT WILL SURPASS ANY STORE OF IT'S KIND IN ALL OF KANSAS CITY.

Then about August 1, or September 1, SEARS ROEBUCK should open with 150,000 square feet of space, one of the finest stores ever built in America, all windowless above the first floor, with a BEAUTIFUL FIRST FLOOR FRONT, and with a large PARKING STATION to the WEST of it for 500 cars. That should bring new trade to the Plaza from a RADIUS OF 100 MILES and create new selling opportunities for every merchant in the Plaza.

Their structure will be beautiful; they will be cooperative with all our group of merchants, and I believe will put new life into the whole Plaza.

I am hoping in the year 1947 SKELLY OIL COMPANY will build a double deck garage for the parking of their employees cars on their vacant ground to the west of their office for 114 cars.

We must provide space for the 625 Employees cars that are already parked all day long in the Plaza. Every merchant must assume his share of responsibility in enforcing EMPLOYEES PARKING RULES . . . we must get them out of our central parking station.

I have also overlooked the great addition that will come with the completion of the UNITY CHURCH, the LARGEST IN KANSAS CITY, during this year, which will also bring a fine crowd of people to the Plaza.

We look forward to the greatly improved BUS SERVICE during the year, upon which your TRAFFIC COMMITTEE is working so diligently, and will soon give you a complete report of the part you can play to be helpful.

PARKING, Ladies and Gentlemen, is today the GREATEST PROBLEM, and I am really afraid it is going to take at least a ONE MILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT over the next few years to meet the MERCHANTS GROWING PARKING NEEDS. We are going to have to have the help of the MERCHANTS in various ways to help justify such a large expenditure on our part. We must have ample parking for your increased number of customers.

I noted with great interest yesterday the large number of merchants carrying GOOD DISPLAY ADS in the "STAR." This helps everyone.

The WAR is OVER. We are confronted with a new buying attitude, and there was never a time when it was more IMPORTANT for EVERY MERCHANT to be ON HIS TOES to meet changing conditions, with more COURTEOUS AND INTERESTED CLERK SERVICE; studying changes in merchandise needs; push new lines; say "thank-you"; and more alert to refer business even to a competitor; more careful to provide more

interesting WINDOW DISPLAYS, and doing his part to keep the PLAZA GROWING BIGGER AND BETTER EVERY DAY IN 1947. By use of mailing lists; all merchants remaining open on Thursday nights; and taking full advantage of Bernice's calls and the facilities offered by our Jack Stark, we certainly are going to go forward in a big way.

Under the LEADERSHIP of your great new President, Elliott Barnard, his fine BOARD OF DIRECTORS and TRUSTEES, by GOOD TEAM WORK, and I mean TEAM WORK, and from splendid INDIVIDUAL EFFORT, let's ride a GREAT, PROSPEROUS YEAR for all of us in the year 1947.

Barney and Jack told me the other day their greatest joy in life comes from building more business; better serving more people – not playing golf or playing poker – but hitting it high for more business.

My pledge, 'TO WORK'.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN080

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.