

Miller Plaza
9 - 37 Miller Plaza, including 3225 Main
Kansas City
Jackson County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1892

HABS

MO-1892

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MILLER PLAZA

HABS No. MO-1892

Location:

3225 Main Street (8-10 Miller Plaza), and running east to west between Main Street and Warwick Boulevard including: 9 Miller Plaza (3237 Main Street), 12-14 Miller Plaza, 16-18 Miller Plaza, 20-22 Miller Plaza, 35-37 Miller Plaza, 31-33 Miller Plaza, 23-25 Miller Plaza, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

NOTE: The east-west street onto which the apartment buildings face has had various names. On plats prior to 1925 it is shown as Linwood Terrace. On some city maps, it is shown as East 32nd Terrace. On others it is designated Miller Plaza. Because it is best known as Miller Plaza and residents have received mail at this address, the final location designation, after consultation with HABS staff, is Miller Plaza.

Date of

Construction: 1923-1924

Present Owner:

Elmer Ray and Julia A. Cain, 5328 Powell, Kansas City, Kansas 66106 (3225 Main Street)
Manuel C. Pecana, 1600 Crockett Circle, Irving, Texas 75038 (9 Miller Plaza)
Raja Endra Shah and Daniel J. Toughey, 14705 West 65th Street, Shawnee, Mission Kansas 66216 (12-14 Miller Plaza)
Mark J. Coco (16-18 Miller Plaza)
Manco, P.O. Box 2156, Independence, Missouri 64050 (15 and 19 Miller Plaza)
Daniels-McCray Lumber, 3000 Pioneer, Kansas City, Missouri 64146 (20-22 Miller Plaza)
Citizens Bank & Trust, 3500 Rainbow, Kansas City, Kansas 66103 (23-25 Miller Plaza)
Main Street Corridor Development Corporation, 4231 Main, Kansas City, Missouri 64111 (24-26 and 32-34 Miller Plaza)
Donald J. DeWit, 1208 West 39th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64111 (27 Miller Plaza)
D.M., D.L., D.R. and S. Johnson, 7316 West 102nd Street, Overland Park, Kansas 66212 (28-30 Miller Plaza)
Robert L. Ogen Trust, 2697 Aldonia Drive, Henderson, Nevada 89014 (31-33 Miller Plaza)
World Savings and Loan Association, P.O. Box 5300, San Leandro, California 94577 (35-37 Miller Plaza)

Present Use: Commercial/apartment residential

**Statement of
Significance:**

The Miller Plaza apartment development demonstrates an extensive, early innovative approach to multi-unit residential planning, utilizing limited space to a maximum degree. Miller Plaza and the adjacent Warner Plaza¹ built by Guy H. McCanles have particular architectural significance in that the buildings that form the apartment complexes are the only known remaining pre-World War II structures with facing, complementary facades in Kansas City, Missouri.² The design of the complex, which utilized ornamented, twin retail/multi-residential buildings constructed at the corner of Main Street and Miller Plaza provided an entrance "gateway" to the apartment complex. This corner gateway entrance and the unique placement of complimenting mirror facades of the apartment buildings on each side of Miller Plaza created the appearance and feeling of a courtyard. This courtyard approach on such a large scale had not been accomplished before in Kansas City.³ In addition, the design represents the departure in the mid-1920s from the classical columned and galleried apartment complex which typified apartment dwellings of similar size and massing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Miller Plaza complex is a significant representation of the impact of the City Beautiful Movement and the Parks and Boulevard Plan, of the development of rapid transit networks, and of the impact of the post-World War I population increases on urban development patterns, housing preferences and design in Kansas City. Guy H. McCanles, in partnership with Roy Gregg from 1912-1920 and with George W. Miller from 1920-1926, specialized in designing, developing and building apartment complexes and hotels. Upon his death in 1932 the Kansas City Star noted that McCanles was "...the most extensive builder of apartment and apartment hotel properties in Kansas City..."⁴ As such, Miller Plaza is representative of the specialization that evolved in development and architectural firms in the early twentieth century and flourished in Kansas City between the post-World War I period and the Great Depression.

On 15 December 1982 the Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission unanimously agreed that the Miller Plaza and adjacent Warner Plaza be incorporated into a historic district and that they individually and as a group met the established historic and architectural criteria necessary for its designation as a historic district pursuant to the Kansas City, Missouri Administrative Code. The Commission determined that the buildings "possess integrity of design, setting, workmanship, feeling and association; that they embody distinctive characteristics of the type period; and that the collection of buildings represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose individual components may lack individual distinction."⁵

Historian: Sarah Fullerton Schwenk
Preservation Consultant
November 10, 1992

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:⁶

1. Date of erection: 1923-24
2. Architect: Frank D. Brockway
3. Developer: McCanles Miller Realty Company
4. Original Owner: McCanles Miller Realty Company

B. Historical Context:

The patterns of development of Kansas City and types and styles of structures built after World War I and before the Great Depression reflected both national trends and the unique circumstances of Kansas City itself. Aesthetically and technically a whole series of developments in the allied fields of city planning, parks and housing evolved in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On both the national level and in Kansas City, the development of architectural styles began to occur in conjunction with site planning. Developer, planner, and architect showed a growing tendency to reject classical styles of architecture (other than decorative embellishments and stylistic motifs) and to design buildings which reflected the practical, utilitarian functions of buildings.⁷ To understand the significance of the Miller Plaza development as representative these changes and its own unique

architectural features, it is necessary to place it the context of certain national and local historical events and trends which impacted the built environment.

Kansas City: 1826-1860

The nucleus of present day Kansas City, Missouri evolved from two early nineteenth century trading centers. The site selected in 1826 by Francois Chouteau, a French fur trader, on the south side of the Missouri River near the confluence of the Kaw River known as the Chouteau's Landing became, upon its platting in 1839, the "Town of Kansas." A second trade staging area approximately four miles to the south near the Missouri-Kansas border was platted in 1835 as the town of Westport. Linking the two communities were primitive narrow "roads" which followed either the river levee or deep ravines in the hilly terrain. By 1847 a wagon road which cut through the bluffs at Main Street in the Town of Kansas connected Westport with the river landing. Resumed trade in the southwest after the end of the Mexican War, the discovery of gold in California in 1848, and the advent of the overland emigrants to California and Oregon stimulated the growth of the communities of Westport and the Town of Kansas. In response to the population increase, the Missouri General Assembly, in 1853, chartered the City of Kansas in 1853. This community's location on the river, assured the City of Kansas dominance over Westport. By 1860, the city counted a population of 4,500; Westport, with its population of 1,200, retained its village status.⁸

Although the residences, commercial structures and other facilities common to small towns in western Missouri could be found clustered around a grid of platted lots in the City of Kansas and Westport, residences and farmsteads spread out faster than population growth. Existing documentation of the appearance of antebellum Kansas City indicates a scattering of small, plain buildings over a hilly terrain.⁹ Prior to the arrival of the railroad in the region, the two communities never obtained a high residential density. The buildings and structures of the period were generally austere, utilitarian, vernacular designs. Residential buildings favored the styles which evolved in the middle south and "little Dixie" area of Missouri.¹⁰ Classical and Gothic Revival styles prevailed as the design choice for the finer residences. Many of the buildings were of log or frame construction, but brick was a common building material for buildings that were more formal in design and decorative treatment. Thus, both traditional practices and the influences of academic architecture determined the styling that was used in the buildings of mid-nineteenth century Kansas City.¹¹

Kansas City: 1870-1910

The Railroad's Impact on Patterns of City Development

Between 1870 and 1910, commercial, manufacturing and residential developments became more clustered and grew in density; yet, the "spread out" character of Kansas City's built environment continued. This was due to the nature of the topography and the location of a growing network of railroads which established the city as a funnel for receiving goods and shipping a wide variety of agricultural and livestock products.

The advent of the railroad in Kansas City in the 1860s quickly reoriented the city's development and growth away from the river landing. Railroads became the central factor in the location of commercial and industrial structures and buildings in the city. The manufacturing and distributing center for the agribusiness of the region located in the west bottoms to utilize the nearby railway lines.¹² Here the number of livestock traders, meat and leather processing plants, grain elevators and flour mills quickly grew.

Business houses moved a half mile inland from the banks of the river to the "square," forming a mixture of frame and brick buildings, seldom more than three stories high. These commercial buildings began to feature architectural design features for their own sake. Elaborate cornices, decorative lintels, stone foundations and assorted stylistic details emphasized the more permanent nature of a city which had settled into a period of established economic growth and stability. Successful businessmen located their homes a short distance to the west of the business center and east of the bottoms in a residential area known as Quality Hill. Development moved south and east from the river on the north and the bottoms on the west. Main Street, running north and south displaced the levee as the principal arena of business activity and became a central axis for development.

Effect of Population Increase and Rapid Transit Systems on Late Nineteenth Century Patterns of Development

A tremendous increase in population accompanied the emergence of Kansas City in the post-war period as a major manufacturing and railroad distributing center for the products of the plains. Estimates of the population in the years 1866-67 range between 15,000 and 25,000 which is attributed to completion of the rail line to the east in 1865.¹³ The boom economy of the 1880s and the influx of native born and foreign immigrants affected Kansas City as it did other urban centers in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Kansas City's population expanded ten-fold between 1870 and 1910 reaching nearly 200,000. The greatest growth in this period occurred between 1880 and 1887 when the population doubled

to 125,000, creating a need for expanded city services as well as causing substantial physical changes in the community.¹⁴

Private developers and public works projects leveled the hilliest parts of the terrain and filled ravines. Massive cuts through the river bluffs allowed access to the steamboat landing and waterfront rail lines. The city showed a continuation of its tendency to urban sprawl with residences and businesses scattered over the terrain. The hilly nature of the topography physically isolated the railway yards from the retail and commercial heart of the city and new industrial and warehouse construction remained visually separate from the immediate area of the downtown expansion. But, as growth continued, different sub-communities or neighborhoods emerged within the expanding municipality, reflecting informal social, economic and ethnic stratifications.¹⁵

A series of land annexations kept pace with the growth. The annexations in 1873 and 1885 expanded the city boundaries south to 31st Street and east to Cleveland with the state line and the river remaining the other boundaries. By 1897 the city boundaries reached east and south to finally include Westport as part of Kansas City. And in 1909 the city limits reached 77th and 78th street on the south and to the Blue River on the east, an area encompassing some sixty square miles, where they remained until after World War II.

By the 1880s, Kansas City's cable car system was the third largest in cable milage in the country. The growing ease of movement within the city encouraged the development in recently annexed areas. At this time, the city went through the first of two major periods of construction, one peaking in the second half of the 1880s the other in the very early years of this century.¹⁶

At the same time as the tremendous expansion in the late nineteenth century population occurred nationally, the advent of rapid transportation systems and, later, the automobile created a crisis for urban areas. As the population spread out into a wider radius, rapidly developing cities experienced a develop-and-abandon phenomenon. Property values tended to be high in the center core and along the expanding rim, while intervening blighted or undeveloped areas were doomed to fluctuating or declining value.¹⁷ In Kansas City, as the city spread to the south and east, the proclivity to develop-and-abandon wreaked havoc on stable land values.

The Impact of the City Beautiful Movement

In Kansas City the most significant impact on development, building patterns, land usage and, to a lesser extent, design was the park and boulevard system designed and implemented by landscape

architect, George Kessler. In philosophy, Kessler's plan was part of a larger movement. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a spirit of progressive reform occurred in the United States in response to the rapid urbanization of the country. Based on the concept of planned development which considers the relationship between the physical environment and urban ills, the mission of the City Beautiful Movement was to make life in cities convenient, safe and pleasant. The roots of the movement were in the emerging field of landscape architecture and the impact of Frederick Law Olmsted's design for Central Park in the 1860s and his design and layout of the Columbian Exposition in 1893.¹⁸

In Kansas City, as in other cities, elected officials responded to the ills of rapid urbanization with zoning regulations, minimum standards of light, air and space and numerous other building, health and safety codes. But, the city's leaders, many of whom were well educated and well traveled, decried the lack of community brought on by rapid growth and advocated comprehensive planning and a mixing of natural beauty with the city's commercial development. Through the efforts of these individuals, Kansas City's residents increasingly supported attempts to develop parks as recreational havens for urban dwellers.

The final success of the city's own city beautiful movement was due to a fortuitous mix of politics and circumstance. Kessler, who had studied with Frederick Law Olmsted, came to Kansas City in the mid-1880s. His design for the beautification of Hyde Park between 36th and 39th streets on Gillham Road and the resulting increase in real estate values caught the attention of the city's leaders.¹⁹ Hired by the city, Kessler presented a grand urban design for creating a beautiful city with stable property values. Based on the concept of controlled development, Kessler utilized the city's natural topography and designed a system of parks converted from blighted areas of bluffs and ravines linked by an extensive boulevard system featuring landscape plantings and wide streets divided by parkway medians.

Kessler's intention was to affect the placement and design of buildings. He based his plan on the premise that each boulevard would serve as the hub of the more desirable and expensive residential neighborhoods, "...the influence radiating downwards to adjoining districts." In nearby neighborhoods, small groups of retail stores and services would concentrate. This controlled mix of residential and retail land use and easy access to parks connected by the boulevards would check the tendency to escape urban ugliness by flight to outlying areas. Thus the city would develop more compactly and harmoniously, stabilizing and increasing land values.²⁰

The plan was not only bold but effective. Kessler created a boulevard and park system of genuine distinction as part of a broader philosophy of utilizing planned development to create a livable city.²¹ By 1910 the new park and boulevard system emphasized the inadequacies of older developments and stimulated new planning. Throughout the city new housing; newer, better facilities; schools; hospitals; and retail shops appeared.²² By 1917 Kessler was able to report that the park and boulevard system had stabilized patterns of land use.

Advent of Professional Architects in Nineteenth Century Kansas City
Prosperous times changed the city's appearance and increased architectural sophistication on the part of craftsman and client. All combined "to make over what had been for all practical purposes a medium sized western city just barely removed from its frontier origins."²³ During this period of expansion and growth, professionalism in architecture became firmly established in the city. Between 1875 and 1880 the city enacted laws which began to establish guidelines for buildings and by 1909 a modern building code was in effect.

The construction boom of the 1880s attracted major firms from Chicago and New York to open temporary offices in the city. The number of architects tripled in the five years between 1884 and 1888, a peak that was not reached again until the building boom of 1904-1906. These "architects" ranged in skills and expertise from the academically or professionally trained to carpenter-builders who simply proclaimed themselves architects. Nevertheless, the buildings and structures erected in the period reflect the presence of competent and even innovative architectural practices.²⁴

Taller buildings and a substantial number of large commercial buildings of some degree of design and ornamentation appeared. In the West bottoms, the railroads and stockyards spawned the building of packing houses, mills and elevators. New commercial buildings flanked the railroad tracks and the recently completed Union Depot featured "fussy eclectic details" in its architectural styling.²⁵ The elaborate Second Empire, Gothic, Romanesque, and Victorian Gothic styles of the residences of the wealthy also reveals the presence of academically trained architects. But by the turn of the century, which followed a general construction depression in the 1890s, newly erected buildings and residences witnessed a departure from the excesses of the eighties. A cautious, generalized change to Renaissance or classic architectural forms evolved.²⁶

Kansas City: 1910-1933

The late nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century were the beginnings of a process to meet the ills of rapid development, urban congestion, flight from the city core and fluctuating land values. During the first decade of the new century, the city's population grew by 54%. Between 1910 and 1933 the population of Kansas City increased by 150,000, a rate of growth mirroring that of other urban centers in the country. The social ills which accompany rapid population increases resulted in a shift from the aesthetic abstractions of the Victorian period to the social realities of the early twentieth century. The resulting expansion in the building field stimulated the rationalization of American building technology for the next thirty years. As a result, architects gradually turned to more functional styles.²⁷ In Kansas City this shift occurred more slowly. But the need for more housing and the expanding number of commercial structures created a shift to functional adaptations of historic styles and new more functional approaches to design.

Development of the Mid-Town Area and Main Street Corridor

During the early years of the twentieth century, as access to the outlying areas increased, manufacturing and warehouses became more dispersed and suburban residential developments sprang up on the southern and eastern boundaries of the city. Meanwhile the area between the downtown business and manufacturing centers and suburban developments retained a rural character.

Although development in the mid-town area began in the 1880s, it did not take hold and accelerate until the period between 1905-1915.²⁸ Along some of the boulevards in the area there were some well-established, high-quality residential areas such as Janssen Place and Hyde Park. Elsewhere the area contained a scattering of residences on large lots.

The renovation of Penn Valley Park as part of the city's Parks Plan and the relocation, in 1914, of the city's train station to 23rd and Main streets stimulated the southward expansion of Main Street as a business corridor and the development of what became known as the mid-town area.²⁹ Still there was little commercial development between the Union Station and the suburbs until the housing shortage after World War I and the beginning, in 1921, of construction on the Liberty Memorial across from the Union Station. Just as Kessler predicted, commercial and multi-family development followed the comprehensive development plan. Areas such as Main Street, which radiated away from established quality residential neighborhoods along the boulevards, developed clusters of apartment dwellings, hotels, and neighborhood businesses.

Another factor stimulated the Main Street development. Long after the City Beautiful Movement faded in Kansas City, J. C. Nichols, realtor and developer, kept the ideas alive by meshing his developments on the southwestern boundaries of the city with Kessler's ideas. Nichols' real estate projects were based on the concepts of landscape architecture. Accessibility to public transit and the boulevard system, the convenience of pedestrians, and buffer zones for residential areas were primary considerations in the planning of each Nichols Company's developments. The firm utilized and expanded the use of wide streets and controlled neighborhood development with corner shopping developments on the "English Village Plan."³⁰ The continuation of Kessler's plan by Nichols in his private developments further stabilized property values between Nichols' projects to the south and west and attracted developers to the mid-town area. Consequently, Main Street, running midway between development to the southeast and the southwest, continued as the primary north-south commercial sector.

Rise of Apartment Dwellings

The first thirty years of the twentieth century brought changes in life styles and work patterns in the city. During the construction booms of the 1880s and at the turn of the century, Kansas Citians demonstrated a clear preference for the detached house, though some row houses and apartment dwellings were built over the years. As the population and ensuing housing shortages increased, particularly after W.W. I., apartment houses became more attractive housing options. Dr. George Ehrlich of the University of Missouri at Kansas City wrote, "It is extremely difficult to reconstruct the history of speculative real estate development that shaped so much of the city's growth."

The evolution of apartment dwellings in this period reflected changes in architecture in general. In the early part of the century, most apartment buildings in Kansas City were only several stories and featured the popular multi-deck colonnaded veranda, a design motif that sometimes occurred for the length of an entire block. After the war, a decided trend toward historic eclecticism emerged. Stylistic ornamentation appeared on functional plans. English Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassical and Italian Renaissance influences decorated "modern" building plans. In the adaptation of historical design influences for ornamentation, there was also a growing a tendency toward flatter, crisper lines and more mechanically designed ornament.³¹

The era also marked a significant change in building practices and the emergence of a new type of developer. Ehrlich noted that prior to World War I, the builders who engaged in speculative residential construction would have found large buildings "...too difficult a

project, or too expensive for the resources at hand." Thus, due to consumer preferences, financing and expertise, the turn of the century was an era of small apartment dwellings, typically four or six unit buildings. Between the end of the World War I and 1925 when the construction market peaked, larger complexes with more units came into style.³² While the number of apartment buildings erected declined in the post-war period, the number of units increased. The average building increased from six units to between eighteen and twenty-four units.

Larger apartment complexes and commercial projects created specialization and nurtured the collaboration of developer and architect. Many developers made extensive use of certain architects. Some architects and developers specialized only in multi-family and hotel projects. Among those developers who specialized in apartments was the McCanles Building Company.³³

McCanles Miller Realty and the McCanles Building Company³⁴

One of the most extensive builders of apartment and apartment hotel properties in Kansas City, Guy McCanles entered the construction trade in 1907 as a home builder. Working as sole owner of his business, he had built over 200 residences between 1907 and 1912 when Roy Gregg recruited him to form a partnership to build apartments. Operating as the Gregg Realty Company, the two men introduced the modern apartment building as a major factor in Kansas City's housing facilities.³⁵ The Kansas City Star noted that after Gregg and McCanles formed a partnership, "...soon a Gregg flat was a familiar term in real estate usage."³⁶ In a separate article, the Star noted that the two built "...many of the typical 4- and 6-apartment buildings here preceding the World War, and the term 'a Gregg' became synonymous with 'apartment building' here then."³⁷

McCanles supervised design and construction while Gregg developed and managed the sales, exchange and rental departments to market and service the buildings. In 1920, Roy Gregg died. His top salesman, George W. Miller, joined McCanles and the two men formed the McCanles Miller Realty Company. Miller apparently performed many of the same responsibilities assumed by Roy Gregg. McCanles preferred to maintain his working headquarters in a temporary building at job sites, performing the function of building contractor. Business matters relating to other projects and developments were forwarded to the site from the "downtown" office.

Before the company officially dissolved in 1927, Miller and McCanles developed several large apartment projects in Kansas City in addition to the Miller Plaza project. The most notable were an imposing row of six, fire-proof apartments and apartment hotels which accommodated approximately 600 families. One of these, The

Riviera, was the largest, single apartment structure in the city at the time of its construction. The sale of three of these apartment buildings in one transaction was considered in 1932 to be the city's largest real estate transaction in value of properties.³⁸

At the time of the closing of McCanles Miller Realty's joint holdings, the Kansas City Star estimated that McCanles had built "...some 300 apartments scattered throughout Kansas City and ranging from four apartment flats to the sky-scraper hotel types with as many as 160 units in one building." The article noted that "...probably half of the men who have been engaged professionally in the apartment building business here in recent years had their early training in the offices of Mr. McCanles' companies."³⁹

George W. Miller went into home building shortly after he and McCanles dissolved their partnership. The reason for the liquidation of the company is not known. The event occurred at a time that apartment buildings saturated the market. It can be established that the two remained friends as Miller served as an "active" pallbearer at McCanles' funeral in 1932. In 1930 Miller formed Master Crafts-men, Incorporated which specialized in single-family dwellings. In 1940 he returned to apartment construction. Miller served as President of the Home Builders Association of Greater Kansas City in 1949. That same year, he was elected the first mayor of Mission Hills, Kansas, the most exclusive housing sub-division of the region. And, in 1952, he was elected president of the Real Estate Board of Kansas City.⁴⁰

Miller Plaza Development

Miller Plaza is located in the mid-town area on a tract which extended from Main Street to Warwick Boulevard, with a 165 foot frontage on each street. Prior to World War I, the area was a neighborhood of large lots and fashionable single-family residences. But as Main Street continued to develop as a commercial corridor extending into the mid-town area, apartment buildings, hotels and commercial developments gradually displaced single-family dwellings and spacious grounds. In the early 1920s, the McCanles Miller Realty Company engaged in numerous development projects in the mid-town area along Main Street. Miller Plaza was among the last of commercial and multi-family developments in the area between Linwood Boulevard and Thirty-third Street. At the time of the announcement of the project, Guy H. McCanles noted that although he had erected a larger number of buildings in the neighborhood over a period of years, Miller Plaza would represent the largest single development undertaken at one time.⁴¹

McCanles hired Frank D. Brockway to design the complex.⁴² An extensive literature and archival search revealed little about Brockway.⁴³ City directories provided the most information. He

is not listed in the years 1910-14. In 1915 he appears in a residential listing with the designation as carpenter. This designation continues until 1923 when he is listed as a foreman. Subsequent listings at his home address beginning in 1924 list "architect" as his occupation. In the sections listing occupations he is not listed under the categories of architects, builders, carpenters or contractors. The residential listing in 1929 does not indicate an occupation.⁴⁴ Both the Kansas City Star and the Western Contractor in articles about the Miller Plaza project list him as the architect. He is listed as an active pallbearer at McCanles' funeral which indicates a close association with McCanles.⁴⁵ Brockway could have worked as an "in-house" architect and project supervisor for McCanles and, perhaps, other developers. Nor is it unusual for an individual previously listed as a carpenter or foreman to be listed the next year as an architect. It was common at that time for quite a number of individuals who had been involved in some aspect of the building trades or real estate development to assume the title of architect.⁴⁶

The Kansas City Star estimated the total cost for the Miller Plaza development to exceed \$1,000,000 in land and improvements. The property was purchased from Mrs. Charles Miller for "a consideration presumed to have been in excess of \$100,000."⁴⁷ The developers expended \$20,000 to cut a new east-west street between Main Street and Warwick Boulevard and make yard improvements.⁴⁸ The original plans called for six buildings with twelve apartments each to be erected on both sides of the newly created street, with a "court and a shop, office and garage building of English design" on each of the Main Street corners. The apartment "plaza" was to house 144 families while the Main Street commercial buildings would contain eight stores and two garages. The Star quickly dubbed the project an "apartment village."⁴⁹

Sometime between the announcement of the project in August and the completion of the first building in mid-October, the design plans changed. In addition to the two corner commercial buildings, the completed plan featured twelve apartment buildings instead of six. Each building facing onto Miller Plaza contained twelve apartments.⁵⁰ The design of the brick buildings utilized three stylistic variations. A more utilitarian, Colonial Revival style which repeated design elements found in the of the apartment buildings facing onto Miller Plaza replaced the original "English Design" of the apartment/commercial buildings facing Main Street. Built of brick and stone, the corner buildings each cost \$50,000.⁵¹

Beginning at Warwick Boulevard, McCanles erected the buildings just one stage ahead of its neighbor. Begun on September 1, 1923, the contractor completed the project, except for the two large business buildings on the Main Street corners, by January 1, 1924. In March

of that year the developers reported that more than three-fourths of the apartments were rented and that "seven of the 12 apartment buildings either have been sold or placed under contract."⁵²

In design and plan the Miller Plaza apartments were a distinct departure from the multi-deck colonnaded veranda buildings popular before W.W. I and reflected the stylistic variations coming into vogue which utilized ground level terraces. The use of facing facades which mirrored each other created a courtyard effect. This design, implemented on such a large scale, was unique to Kansas City. In design and ornamentation, the development reflected the trend toward historical eclecticism and the use of flatter, crisper linear design in ornamentation. The use of more highly ornamented, twin retail and multi-residential buildings constructed at the Main Street corners provides an entrance "gateway" to the residential apartment complex as well as convenient commercial services for the residents of the development. This usage and placement reflects the influences of the English Garden City movement and is representative of a treatment established by Clyde Nichols and other developers of the era of anchoring residential areas with commercial corners on the English village motif.⁵³

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

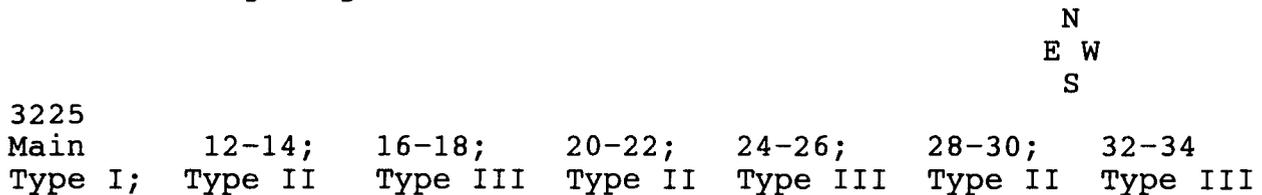
Design elements of the Miller Plaza buildings reveal the influences of the late period of historical eclecticism which is noted for restrained mixtures of Colonial Revival, Tudor and Mediterranean design influences. Frank Brockway utilized a Tapestry Brick stylistic idiom, incorporating Colonial Revival and Tudor design elements in the design of the Miller Plaza buildings. Using brick as a primary construction material and stone for the foundations and as a decorative accent for the string courses, balusters (on the parapet), and for the embellishment around windows and as door surrounds, the architect employed three design variations or "types" to achieve visual continuity and a feeling of a self-contained "court." Reserving one style type for the corner buildings, Brockway alternated the two other design types on the facades of the apartment buildings facing onto Miller Plaza. Other similarities were in height, scale, massing, setback, the use of central entrance bays and the following of the street grade by using coursed stone foundations. The result was a homogeneous "self-contained" development of mirroring facades.

Colonial Revival stylistic influences are reflected in the use of brick walls with an ashlar foundation, symmetrical fenestration,

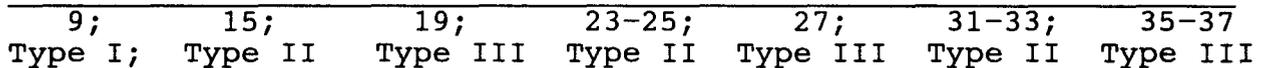
accentuated front entrances with decorative crowns (pediment) centered in the primary facade, elaborated windows above entrances, triple windows, double-hung sashes with multi-pane upper sashes over a single-pane lower sash, and roof line balustrades. Tudor influences employed include tudor arches in door surrounds and stepped projecting parapets.

The corner commercial/apartment buildings located at 3225 Main Street (8-10 Miller Plaza) and 9 Miller Plaza constitute what could, for the purposes of this narrative, be called style "Type I." Designed to be mirror images of each other, they function as the gateway into the development, focusing the corners almost like stage wings. The rectangular, brick multi-family dwellings facing Miller Plaza follow the basic plan of an elaborated entrance bay with accentuated front entrances, centered in the primary facade and flanked by an symmetrical arrangement of window openings.⁵⁴ Among other smaller design elements, "Type II" buildings feature a compound Tudor arched door surround and a stepped parapet in the central entrance bay and stone balusters in the parapet. "Type III" buildings makes use of extensive brick banding with stone detailing, quoins and a square entrance with stoop and engaged brick pilasters.

Thus, in addition to style Type I which typifies the buildings located at the corner of Main Street and Miller Plaza, the apartment buildings facing onto Miller Plaza feature two additional style types. All of the style types were designed to relate to each other in a formulated pattern which can best be represented in the following diagram:



MILLER PLAZA



The only buildings included in the photographs and described in the narrative are those which existed at the time of the HABS photography.⁵⁵ These buildings are designated with an asterisk on the site plan.

B. Site:

The Miller Plaza complex is located on both sides of Miller Plaza between Main street on the west, Warwick Boulevard on the east, Linwood Boulevard on the north and Warner Plaza on the south. Two commercial buildings face onto Main Street, a major thoroughfare. The apartment buildings face onto Miller Plaza, a side street. These buildings follow the street grade causing some of the buildings to have a more pronounced basement level, all of which are of random ashlar stone. the size and setback of each of these apartment buildings are the same.

PART III. ENDNOTES

1. Note: the same is true of the adjacent Warner Plaza apartment complex built by McCanles in 1926. Although documented in separate HABS projects (MO-1892, MO-1893), the two apartment complexes are not considered mutually exclusive; because of the similarities in planning and execution, they are designated on the local level as a single historic district.
2. Kansas City Missouri Landmarks Commission, "Findings of Fact," n.d., p. 2.
3. Kansas City Missouri Landmarks Commission, "Administrator's Report Case No. 0063-D," 15 December 1982, p. 1.
4. "End To Guy M'Canles," Kansas City (Mo.) Star. 14 April 1932, p. 1.
5. Kansas City, Missouri Plan Commission, "Staff Report," 1 February, 1983.
6. City of Kansas City, Missouri Water Permits #28102, #34370, #34949, #35307-11, #75312-16, #76538; City of Kansas City, Missouri Building Permits #13763-69, #13771-74, #13873-74; "About Real Estate," Kansas City (Mo.) Star, 2 March 1924, p. 1D.
7. James Marston Fitch, American Building: The Historical Forces That Shaped It, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), pp. 214, 229.
8. George Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History 1826-1990 Revised and Enlarged Edition, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), pp. 3-9.

9. Ibid., p. 9; The change to "Kansas City" officially occurred in 1889 with the adoption of a new city charter.
10. Howard Wight Marshall, Folk Architecture in Little Dixie, A Regional Culture in Missouri, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981), pp. 2, 30-33, 39, 41.
11. Ehrlich, Kansas City Missouri: An Architectural History, p. 13.
12. Ibid., pp. 29-31.
13. A. Theodore Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett, K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri, (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1978), p. 39.
14. Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, p. 43.
15. Brown, K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri, p. 41.
16. Ibid.
17. Fitch, American Building, p. 242.
18. Ibid., pp. 239-245; Jane Mobley and Nancy Whitehead Harris, A City Within A Park - One Hundred Years of Parks and Boulevards in Kansas City, MO, (Kansas City: Lowell Press, 1991), p. 23.
19. Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, p. 54.
20. Brown, K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri, pp. 160-166.
21. Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, p. 49.
22. Ibid., p. 66.
23. Ibid., pp. 43-44.
24. Ibid., p. 36.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p. 51; Fitch, American Building, p. 214;
27. Ibid., pp. 228-229, 242-245.

28. K.C. A Place in Time, (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, 1977), p. 142.
29. Brown, K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri, p. 179; The term "mid-town" still denotes the area between the business area "downtown" established after the Civil War and old Westport and the Country Club Plaza area to the south.
30. Mobley, A City Within A Park, p. 29; Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, p. 73.
31. Ibid., pp. 67, 84, 89; Mobley, A City Within A Park, p. 291.
32. Ibid., pp. 58, 66-67.
33. Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, p. 67.
34. In "End To Guy M'Canles" it is noted that McCanles maintained a number of holding companies. Through these companies, McCanles owned properties throughout the United States and Canada. These ownerships often resulted from trades of apartment properties in Kansas City. Although he worked in partnership with Roy Gregg and they formed the Gregg Realty Company (1912 - 1920), McCanles is also listed in the Polke's Kansas City Missouri City Directory (Kansas City: Gate City Directory Company, 1915), p. 1277, as the president of McCanles Realty Company. During the period from 1920 - 1927 he operated in partnership with George Miller as the McCanles Miller Realty Company (also referred to as the "McCanles Miller Company" in the articles "A Village of Apartments Arises Almost Over Night," Kansas City (Mo.) Star, 28 October 1923, p. 1F and "12 Apt Blds," Western Contractor, 5 September 1923, p.38). But during this same period, McCanles is also listed separately in the city directories as a building contractor and a general contractor under "McCanles Building Company." After 1927 the "McCanles Building Company" designation continues.
35. "End To Guy M'Canles," p. 1.
36. "About Real Estate," Kansas City (Mo) Star, 18 December 1927, p. 1D.
37. "End To Guy M'Canles," p. 1.
38. "About Real Estate," 18 December 1927, p. 1D; "End To Guy M'Canles," p. 1; "Miller To Realty Post," Kansas City (Mo) Star, 15 December 1952, p. 2.

39. "End To Guy M'Canles," p. 1.
40. "Miller to Realty Post," p. 2.
41. George W. Miller and Guy H. McCanles were principal owners. However, the company appears to be an extension of the Gregg Realty Company, with Miller replacing Gregg upon the latter's death. The Kansas City (Mo) Star, 12 August 1923, p. 2F, notes that the McCanles Miller Realty Company were builders of the so called "Gregg flats," and the transaction was handled by the Gregg Realty Company. As Roy Gregg died in 1920 it appears that the two companies, under the control of the common partner, Guy McCanles, were organized for specific functions as part of McCanles' numerous holding companies.
42. "12 Apartment Buildings," p. 38; "2 Apartment Buildings," Western Contractor, 23 January 1924, p. 35; City of Kansas City, Missouri Water and Building permits previously cited.
43. The search included all relevant current and out-of-print books on local and state history/architecture in public libraries; biographical index listings for state and national architects; local and state biographical trade and social publications; genealogical and vertical files at Mid-Continent Library Genealogy Collection and Missouri Valley Room special collections, Kansas City Public Library; architectural plans, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Missouri Historical Society; Snyder Collection, University of Missouri at Kansas City; vertical files, Kansas City Landmarks Commission; Vital Statistics files, City of Kansas City Missouri; clipping files, Kansas City Star; and local architectural periodicals: Historic Kansas City Foundation Newsletter, Skylines, and MidWest Architect. In addition, existing building permits for all known buildings erected by McCanles were examined.
44. Polke 1915, p. 1277; Polke 1923, p. 846; Polke 1924, p. 853; Polke 1929, p. 874.
45. "12 Apt Blds," p. 38; "2 Apt Bld," p. 36; "A Village of Apartments Rises Almost Overnight," p. 1F; "Rites for Guy H. M'Canles," Kansas City (Mo.) Times, 15 April 1932, p. 3.
46. George Ehrlich, "Partnership Practice and The Professionalization of Architecture in Kansas City, Missouri," Missouri Historical Review 74 (July 1980): 462; Editors of business directories gathered data by contacting businesses for a list of employees. If Brockway was employed by McCanles, the company could have listed him as an architect as they did when applying for building and water permits.

47. Charles A. Miller, Sr. purchased the property around 1903 for \$15,000. Research does not indicate any relationship between Charles A. Miller, Sr. and George W. Miller of McCanles Miller Realty company. Both George W. Miller and Charles A. Miller, Jr. worked for the Gregg Realty Company of which Mr. Guy McCanles was a partner from 1912-1920. As to the origin of the name "Miller Plaza," one can only speculate. It was a common practice in Kansas City to name developments and streets after the original owner of the property as a sort of geographical reference point. It is highly probable that Miller Plaza was also named, according to local custom, for the site of the demolished Charles A. Miller residence. Research indicated that although the Charles A. Miller family were educated, affluent members of Kansas City's upper middle class, they do not appear to be of enough prominence to warrant any individual memorial designation. (There is only one reference to the family in the numerous biographical publications of the era.)
48. Originally referred to as Linwood Terrace, the street is later known as East 32nd Street Terrace and Miller Plaza.
49. Kansas City Star, 12 August 1923, p. 2F; "A Village Arises Almost Overnight," p. 1F.
50. "12 Apt Bld," p. 38.
51. "2 Apt Blds," p. 36; Subcontractors were: Latimer Brothers, heating and plumbing; William LaPierre, electrical wiring; A.J. Shirk, roofing; Sulemeister Stone Company, marble; Kansas City Mantle and Tile Company, tile; Hertig Millworks, millwork; Lumbermen's Supply Company, cut stone; Ben Parlenheimer, painting; Ben Mattingly, plastering; and Murphy Door Bed Company, beds.
52. "About Real Estate," 2 March 1924, p. 1D; Different accounts show some inconsistency in the counting of the buildings. There are 14 buildings in the complex. Twelve are individual apartment buildings. Two encompass the Main Street stores, apartments on the upper floors and apartment wings or ells which face on Miller Plaza.
53. Mobley, A City Within A Park, p. 21.
54. Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1985), pp. 319, 322-26, 341, 356, 359.

55. Determination of the style type of buildings not existing at the time of the HABS photography was taken from survey information compiled in 1983 located in the Historic Inventory file of the Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission.

PART IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Previous Photographic Documentation:** Photographs and negatives of a 1983 historic inventory survey are on file at the Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, City Hall.

B. Selected Bibliography

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"Staff Report." Kansas City, Missouri Plan Commission, 1 February 1983, pp. 1-4. (Typewritten.)

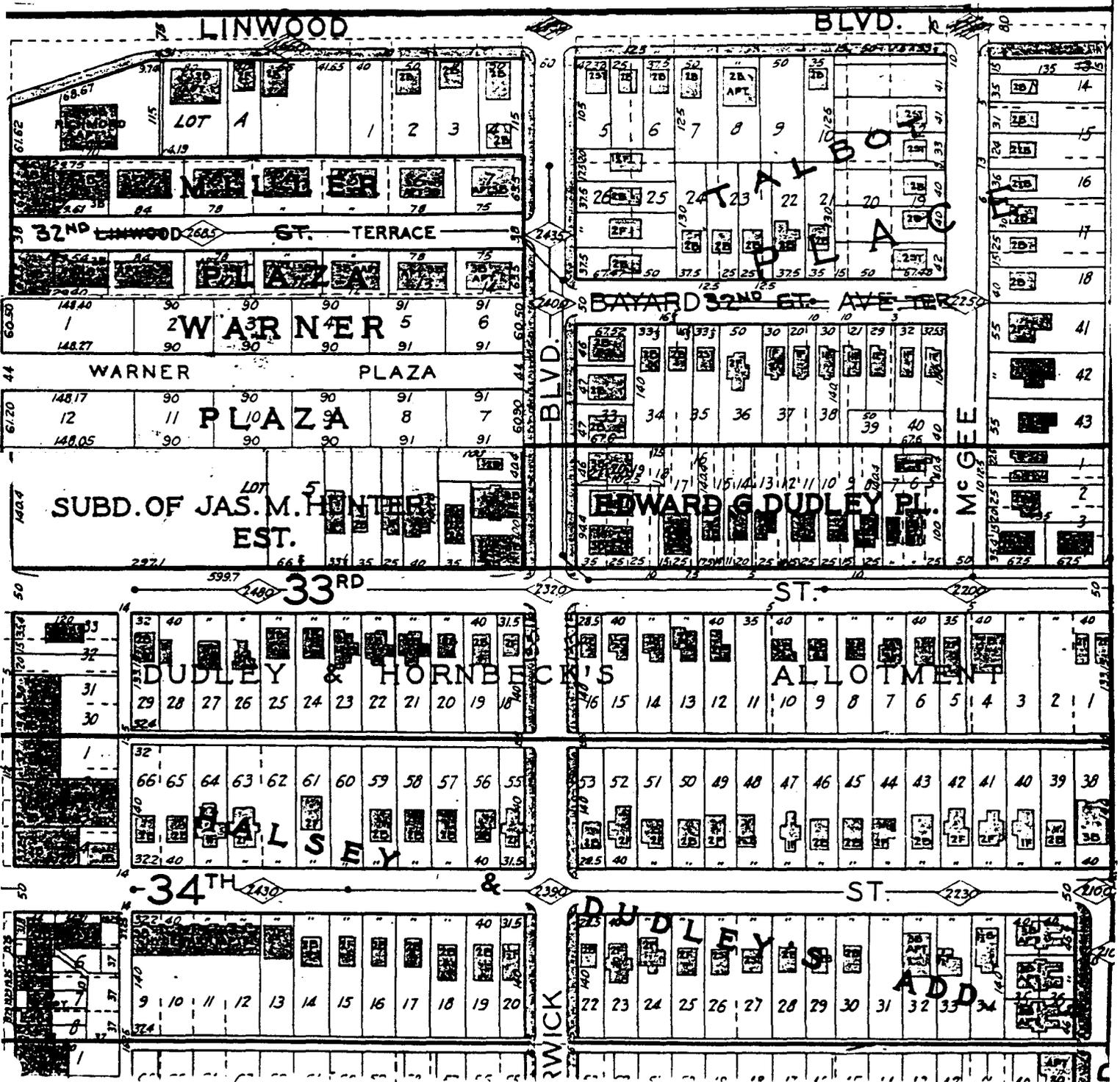
"12 Apt Blds." Western Contractor, 5 September 1923, p. 28.

"2 Apt Blds." Western Contractor, 23 January 1924, p. 35.

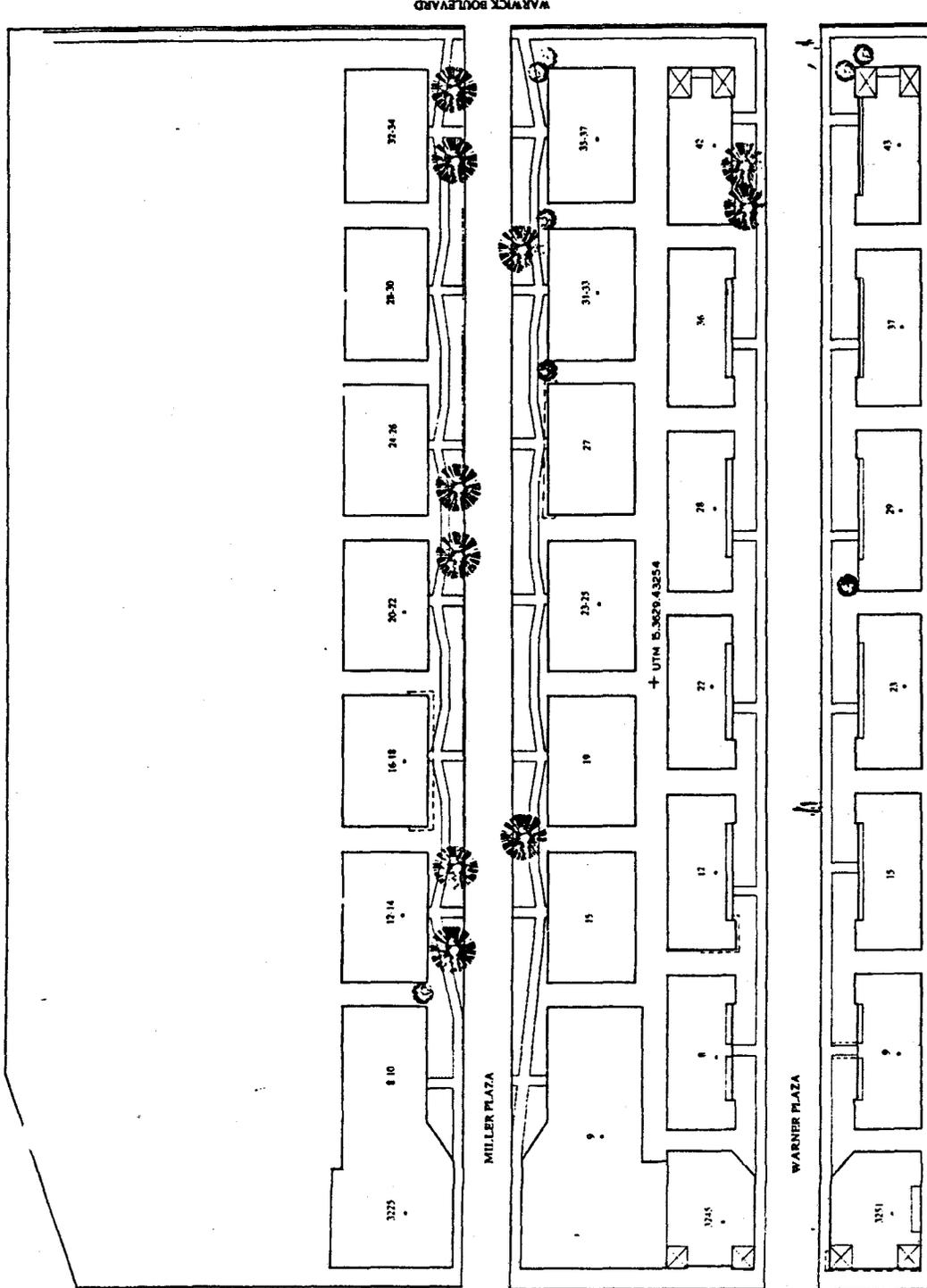
PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

This Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documenting Miller Plaza in 1989-1992 was undertaken and supervised by the Department of Housing and Community Development of Kansas City, Missouri. The project was conducted in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement among the City of Kansas City, Missouri, the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, which requires a record be created of buildings to be demolished in the project area. Mark L. Moseman, Chief of Planning for the Department of Housing and Community Development of the City of Kansas City, Missouri, supervised the project and assembled the photographic record. Cliff Hall, of Kansas City conducted the archival photography. Kevin Cacy and Paul Helmer of the Department of Housing and Community Development of Kansas City, Missouri prepared the site plan. Lisa Brisco of the Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri assembled departmental records for the research phase. Historic preservation consultant, Sarah F. Schwenk of Independence, Missouri, conducted historical research and provided architectural analysis and descriptions.

Plate 54. Atlas of Kansas City, Missouri and Environs 1925



LINWOOD BOULEVARD



PHOTOS OF THESE STRUCTURES ARE INCLUDED IN THE DOCUMENTATION.
 PLANS SHOWN ARE TAKEN FROM THE ACCOMPANYING PHOTOS, BUT WHERE REMOVED
 WITH IDENTIFICATION OF THE SITE. SPECIFIC PLAN TYPES ARE UNCOMMON.
 STREET ADDRESS NUMBERS ARE SHOWN ON EACH BUILDING.

SITE PLAN
 SCALE: 1" = 30'

THIS DOCUMENT SUBMITTED TO THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS,
 WAS DEEMED UNADMISSIBLE BY THE COLLECTIONS STAFF OF
 HABS/HAR, ALTHOUGH ON 24 X 36 INCH MYLAR. THE
 DRAWING WAS A XEROX OF THE ORIGINAL AS THE INFORMATION
 THIS SHEET CAN BE OBTAINED FROM OTHER SOURCES.

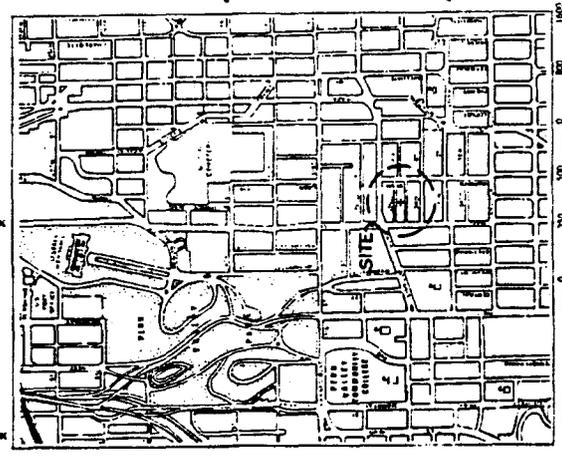
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 REFERENCE IN THE HISTORY. FOR A MEASURED DRAWING
 PLEASE SEE A KANSAS CITY AGENCY, SUCH AS CITY
 PLANNING.

APRIL 2, 1998
 VIRGINIA S. LEE

DRAWN BY KEVIN CACY-1992 BOUNDED BY MAIN STREET AND WARWICK BOULEVARD KANSAS CITY JACKSON COUNTY MISSOURI HABS No. MO-1893

MILLER PLAZA AND WARNER PLAZA

MILLER PLAZA WAS DESIGNED BY FRANK B. BROCKWAY AND
 BUILT IN 1925-27 BY THE MCCANLESS-MILLER REALTY COM-
 PANY. ROBERT F. GORRALL DESIGNED WARNER PLAZA, AND
 THE MCCANLESS BUILDING COMPANY CONSTRUCTED IT IN
 1926. THESE APARTMENT COMPLEXES REPRESENT THE ONLY
 REMAINING KANSAS CITY EXAMPLES OF DEVELOPMENTS
 WITH COMPLEMENTING FACADES FACING EACH OTHER
 ON EACH STREET. THE DESIGNS ARE ALSO RARE AS EARLY
 AND INNOVATIVE ATTEMPTS AT NO.-FOUNT RESIDENTIAL
 PLANNING, UTILIZING SPACE TO A MAXIMUM DEGREE. THE
 CLOSE PROXIMITY OF THE BUILDINGS TO EACH OTHER AND
 TO THE STREET CREATE A COURTYARD APPEARANCE, AN-
 CROSED ON THE WEST END BY MIXER-USE BUILDINGS
 FRONTING BOTH MAIN STREET AND THE SIDE STREETS.



LOCATION MAP METERS 0 200 400 600 800 1000
 TAKEN FROM USGS MAP 104 KANSAS CITY, OMAHA BRANCH 1
 THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOP-
 MENT OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI SUPERVISED THE DUCTI-
 ON OF MILLER PLAZA AND WARNER PLAZA IN 1980.
 1992. THE PROJECT WAS CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH
 THE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT AMONG THE CITY OF
 KANSAS CITY, THE MISSOURI STATE HISTORIC PRESERVA-
 TION OFFICE AND THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVA-
 TION, WHICH REQUIRES THAT A RECORD BE MADE OF THE
 PLAZAS BEFORE DEMOLITION DUE TO A SHOPPING CENTER
 PROJECT.