

WARNER PLAZA,
Both sides of Warner Plaza
Between Main Street and
Warwick Boulevard
Kansas City
Jackson County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1893

HABS

MO-1893

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WARNER PLAZA

HABS No. MO-1893

Location: Both sides of Warner Plaza between Main Street and Warwick Boulevard. 3245 Main Street; 3251 Main Street; 8, 9, 12, 15, 22, 23, 28, 29, 36, 37, 42, 43 Warner Plaza, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

Date of Construction: 1926

Present Owner: Oak Park Bank, c/o Bob Sperry, P.O. Box 12450, Overland Park, Kansas 66212 (3247 Main Street)
Edward and Nancy Chun, 11709 Belmont, Kansas City, Missouri 64134 (3251 Main Street)
Larry McCarty, Box 750491, Topeka, Kansas 66675 (8 Warner Plaza)
Milton T., Edna R. and Tricia G. Jenkins, 7245 Jarboe, Kansas City, Missouri 64114 (9 Warner Plaza)
Main Street Corridor Development Corporation, 4231 Main, Kansas City, Missouri 64111 (12, 15, 22, 23, 28, 29, 37, 43 Warner Plaza)
Charles M. and Agnes Conrad, 107 East Gregory, Kansas City, Missouri 64114 (36 Warner Plaza)
Celeste R. Bartlett, 3 Marier Lane, Rotonda, Florida 33947 (42 Warner Plaza)

Present Use: Commercial/apartment residential

Statement of Significance: The Warner Plaza apartment development demonstrates an extensive, early innovative approach to multi-unit residential planning, utilizing limited space to a maximum degree. Warner Plaza and the adjacent Miller 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 highly ornamented, twin retail/multi-residential buildings constructed at the Main Street corners of Warner Plaza provided an entrance "gateway" to the apartment complex. The gateway entrance and the unique placement of complementary facades of the apartment buildings on each side of Warner Plaza created the appearance of a courtyard. This courtyard approach on such a large scale had not

been accomplished before in Kansas City except in the Miller Plaza project.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 Warner 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 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, Warner 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: 1926
2. Architect: Robert F. Gornall
3. Developer: McCanles Building Company
4. Original Owner: McCanles Building Company
5. Original Plans and Construction: Only the architectural plan for 8 Warner Plaza was located during research investigations. Microfilm copies are readily available through the Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri at Kansas City.

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 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 the buildings.⁷ To understand the significance of Warner Plaza as representative of these changes and its own unique architectural features, it is necessary to place it in 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 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. The river traffic generated by resumed trade in the southwest after the end of the Mexican War and the discovery of gold in California in 1848 stimulated the growth of the communities of Westport and the Town of Kansas. In response to these developments, the Missouri General Assembly chartered the City of Kansas in 1853. This community's location on the river, the advent of the overland emigrants to California and Oregon, and the opening of the Kansas Territory to settlement gave it dominance over Westport. By 1860, the City of Kansas counted a population of 4,500; Westport, with its population of 1,200, retained its village status.⁸

A scattering of small, plain buildings over a hilly terrain characterizes the appearance of antebellum Kansas City.⁹ The residences, commercial structures and other facilities common to small towns in western Missouri clustered around a grid of platted lots in the City of Kansas and Westport. Nevertheless, residences and farmsteads spread out faster than population growth. As a result, the two communities never obtained a high residential density prior to the arrival of the railroad in the region.

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 construction was common for buildings that were more formal in design and decorative treatment. Thus, both tradition and the influences of academic architecture determined any conscious styling used in the mid-nineteenth century buildings of Kansas City.¹¹

Kansas City: 1870-1910

The Railroad's Impact on Patterns of City Development

Between 1870 and 1910, the "spread out" character of Kansas City's built environment continued despite the fact that commercial, manufacturing and residential developments became more clustered and grew in density. This was due to the nature of the topography and the locations chosen by a growing network of railroads which funneled manufactured goods into the city and carried a wide variety of agricultural and livestock products to the east.

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, industrial and residential 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 in numbers. Business houses moved about a half mile inland from the banks of the river to the "square." Consisting of 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 an 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 main arena of business activity and became the 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 distribution center for the products of the plains. Estimates of the population in the years 1866-67 range between 15,000 and 25,000 and 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 still tended to physically isolate the railway yards from the retail and commercial heart of the city and new industrial and warehouse construction remained visually separate from the downtown areas of expansion. But as population 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. During this time the city developed an extensive rapid transit system. By the 1880s, Kansas City's cable car system was the third largest in cable mileage in the country. The growing ease of movement within the city encouraged the development in recently annexed areas.

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 streets 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. During this period the city went through two major periods of construction. The first peaked in the second half of the 1880s; the second occurred 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 The same was true of 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 City Beautiful Movement had as its mission making 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. Civic 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 avenues divided by parkway medians.

Kessler's intention was to affect the placement and design of buildings. His plan was based 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. By 1910 the new park and boulevard system emphasized the inadequacies of older developments and stimulated new planning. Throughout the city, new housing; better facilities, schools, and hospitals; and retail shops appeared.²¹ 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
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.²² 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.²³

A substantial number of taller and larger commercial buildings of some degree of design and ornamentation began to appear. 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.²⁴ The elaborate designs in Second Empire, Gothic, Romanesque, and Victorian Gothic styles of the residences of the wealthy also reflected the presence of academically trained architects. But after the 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 and classic architectural forms evolved.²⁵

Kansas City: 1910-1933

The late nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century were the beginnings of a process of meeting the ills of rapid development, urban congestion, flight from the city core and fluctuating land values. From this process a boulevard and park system of genuine distinction was created as part of a philosophy on the part of civic leaders of planned development to create a livable, beautiful city.²⁶ This era of 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."²⁷

During the first decade of the new century, the city's population grew by 54 percent. And 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 attendant 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 twentieth century. The resulting demands on construction dictated by growth stimulated the rationalization of American building technology for the next thirty years. As a result, architects gradually turned to more functional styles.²⁸ 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

As access extended to the outlying areas during the early years of the twentieth century, manufacturing and warehouses became more dispersed and suburban 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 1905-1915.²⁹ Along 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.³⁰ 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 that radiated away from the boulevards and adjoining high quality residential neighborhoods, 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 idea 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 major components in the design of each of their developments.³¹ The Nichols Company utilized and expanded the use of wide streets and controlled neighborhood development with corner shopping developments on the "English Village Plan." The continuation of components 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 tremendous 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. 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." 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."³² 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.

As the population and ensuing housing shortages increased, particularly after W.W. I., apartment houses became more attractive housing options. Between the end of the war and 1925, when the construction market peaked, larger complexes with more units came into style. 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.³³

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. Nichols' adaptation of the Spanish and English motifs were often emulated by other developers establishing unique local design patterns. In the adaptation of historical design influences for ornamentation, there was also a growing a tendency toward flatter, crisper, more mechanical lines and ornamentation.³⁴

The era also marked a significant change in building practices and the emergence of a new type of developer. Larger apartment complexes and commercial projects created specialization and nurtured the collaboration of developer and architect. Some architects and developers specialized only in multi-family and hotel projects. Among those developers who specialized in apartments was the McCanles Building Company.³⁵

Guy H. McCanles and the McCanles Building Company³⁶

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 were responsible for the introduction of the modern apartment building as a major factor in Kansas City's housing facilities.³⁷ 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.³⁸ 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."³⁹

McCanles supervised design and construction while Gregg developed and managed the sales, exchange and rental departments to market and serve 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.⁴⁰

Before the company officially dissolved in 1927, Miller and McCanles developed several large apartment projects in Kansas City. 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 transactions in value of properties.⁴¹

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."⁴²

Warner Plaza Development

Warner Plaza is located in the mid-town area on a tract which extended from Main Street to Warwick Boulevard. Prior to the

1920s, the area was once 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 the single-family dwellings and spacious grounds. In March of 1926 the McCanles Building Company purchased from John Bullene Warner the tract of land on which Warner Plaza was constructed. Warner owned the property on Main Street where his father, Major William Warner, had lived. Major Warner was a former United States Senator (1905-1911) and mayor of Kansas City (1870-1871).⁴³

In the 1920s, Guy McCanles specialized in projects in the mid-town area along the Main Street. Warner Plaza was among the last of developments in the area between Linwood Boulevard and Thirty-fifth Street and was, at that time, one of the largest development undertakings of the McCanles Company. Like its neighbor to the north, Miller Plaza, the project was classified locally as an "apartment village."⁴⁴

Robert F. Gornall, a prominent architect noted for his work in commercial buildings, served as the project architect.⁴⁵ Gornall first appears in Kansas City in 1909-1910 as a draftsman for L.G. Middaugh. There is no listing either under a residential address or occupation in business directories from 1910-1913. He is listed in 1914 as a draftsman for Sanneman and Goold and in 1915 as a draftsman for S.B. Tarbet and Company. By 1920 he is listed as an architect with the firm of Tarbet and Gornall and continues in that partnership until 1923, when he is listed as an architect in the firm of Lodge and Gornall. Between 1924 and 1934 he is listed as practicing alone. After 1935 no listing is found. He is believed to have moved to Wyoming at this time.⁴⁶ During the years 1924-1929, Gornall was involved extensively in the mid-town development, concentrating on commercial, retail and apartment structures.⁴⁷

Extensive research did not establish whether or not Gornall received academic training as an architect. A progression from draftsman to architect would not have been unusual. In Kansas City at this time, the traditional master-apprentice system dominated the training of architects. It was quite common for individuals who had been involved in the building trades or real estate development to assume the title of architect. "Some were engineers who enlarged their activity. A number had been employees of architects, often draughtsmen, who stepped upward in responsibilities."⁴⁸

The plan for Warner Plaza closely followed that of the adjacent Miller Plaza project, developed by McCanles Miller Realty in 1923-1924.⁴⁹ Like the Miller Plaza project, the developers demolished the residence and cut an east-west street through the development.

Gornall's plan for the Warner Plaza development originally called for twin, seven-story hotel and business buildings designed in a "Spanish mode" to be located at the corners of Main Street and Warner Plaza. The two-story buildings that were constructed retained many of these design features, including the twin, arcaded cupolas at the corners.⁴⁹

In design and plan, the Warner 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 were repetitive and similar in design and scale created a courtyard. This effect, implemented on such a large scale, was unique to Kansas City. In design and ornamentation, the Spanish motif reflected the post-W.W.I. trend toward historical eclecticism and the use of flatter, crisper linear design in ornamentation. The use of more highly ornamented, twin commercial\apartment buildings constructed at the Main Street corners provided 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 (including the use of Spanish Eclectic designs) established by Clyde Nichols and other developers of the era of anchoring residential areas with commercial corners on the English village plan.⁵⁰

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

The design of Warner Plaza is of the Spanish Eclectic style⁵¹ and incorporates a decorative Spanish brick idiom. The architect repeated the concept used three years earlier for the adjacent Miller Plaza of utilizing variations of the same design to achieve visual continuity and a feeling of a self-contained "court." The original fourteen buildings featured four distinct design treatments (one design treatment has two minor variations). Other similarities are in height, scale, massing, setback, the use of central entrance bays and the following of street grade by using coursed stone foundations. Typical of the Spanish Eclectic style, different visual units of each building have separate roof forms of varying heights arranged in an informal, asymmetrical patterns which mimic the varied roof forms of Spanish villages. Other Spanish Eclectic influences include the use of focal point doors and arched windows emphasized by adjacent columns, pilasters or carved stonework; multi-pane, paired doors leading to balconies; plateresque, low relief carving; and decorative ornamentation

reflecting historic Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance influences on Spanish architecture.

The corner commercial/apartment buildings located at 3245 and 3251 Main Street and Warner Plaza constitute what could be called, for the purposes of this narrative, "Style Type I." Designed to be mirror images of each other, they are the most elaborately ornamented of the buildings in the development and function as the gateway entrance into the apartment complex which faces onto Warner Plaza. The three-story, brick apartment dwellings facing Warner Plaza follow the basic plan of a recessed center bay terminating in an abbreviated mansard-like roof flanked by two projecting bays at either end. Typical of the Spanish Eclectic style, the fenestration is asymmetrical utilizing assorted arrangements of single and paired windows, balconies, and off-center focal entrances in the recessed central bay. The architect varied the stylistic treatment by overt and subtle changes in decorative elements of the center and end bays and alternating the use of either a curvilinear mission style parapet or arcaded tower in end bays.

Thus, in addition to the Type I buildings facing onto Main Street, the apartment buildings which face onto Warner Plaza feature three additional style "types" (with two sub-variations of one type). All of the buildings are arranged in such a manner that each type faces each other in a formulated pattern which can best be represented in the following diagram:



3245						
Main	No. 8	No.12	No. 22	No. 28	No. 36	No. 42
Type I;	Type II;	Type III;	Type IVa;	Type IVb;	Type IVa;	Type III

WARNER PLAZA

Type I;	Type II;	Type III;	Type IVb;	Type IVa;	Type IVb;	Type III
3251	No. 9	No. 15	No. 23	No. 29	No. 37	No. 43
Main						

The only buildings included in the photographs and described in the narrative are those which existed at the time of the HABS photography.⁵³ These buildings are designated with an asterisk on the site plan.

B. Site

The Warner Plaza complex is located on both sides of Warner Plaza between Main Street on the west, Warwick Boulevard on the east, Miller on the north and 33rd Street on the south. Two commercial buildings face onto Main Street, a major thoroughfare. The apartment buildings face onto Warner Plaza, a side street. These buildings follow the street grade of Warner Plaza causing some of the buildings have a more pronounced basement level, all of which are of the random ashlar stone capped by a stringcourse. The size and setback of each of these buildings are the same.

PART III. ENDNOTES

1. The same is true of the adjacent Miller Plaza apartment complex built by McCanles in 1923-24. Although documented in separate HABS projects (HABS No. MO-1892, HABS No. MO-1893), the two apartment complexes are not considered mutually exclusive; because of the similarities in planning and execution, they are locally designated 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 #28054, #85591-99, #85600, #85657, #9370; City of Kansas City, Missouri Building Permits #14692-99, #14700-01, #14749-50, #14766-67.
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. 66.
22. Ibid., p. 41.
23. Ibid., p. 36.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 51; Fitch, American Building, p. 214;
26. Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, p. 49.
27. Ibid., pp. 43-44.
28. Fitch, American Building, pp. 228-229, 242-245.

29. K.C. A Place in Time, (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, 1977), p. 142.
30. 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.
31. Mobley, A City Within A Park, p. 29; Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, p. 73.
32. Ibid., pp. 58, 66-67.
33. Ibid., p. 67.
34. Ibid., pp. 67, 84, 89; Mobley, A City Within A Park, p. 291.
35. Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, p. 67.
36. 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 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.
37. "End To Guy M'Canles," p. 1.
38. "About Real Estate," Kansas City (Mo) Star, 18 December 1927, p. 1D.
39. "End To Guy M'Canles," p. 1.
40. Ibid.

41. "End To Guy M'Canles," p. 1.
42. "Administrator's Report." p. 2; The naming of the apartment complex and street "Warner Plaza" could be in honor of Major Warner, or it could be a continuation of the local habit of designating new developments by the previous ownership/site as a point of geographical reference. The fact that the earlier Miller Plaza apartment complex was the site of the Charles A. Miller residence, and the fact that the family had no particular local fame, suggests that the naming of both Miller Plaza and Warner Plaza was a continuation of local custom regarding previous ownership/site not an honorific.
43. Kansas City (Mo.) Star, 12 August 1923, p. 2F; "A Village Arises Almost Overnight," p. 1F.
44. City of Kansas City, Missouri water and building permits previously cited.
45. Kansas City Missouri Landmarks Commission research files provided the chronology of Gornall's employment which was verified by the consultant in Kansas City business directories. The clipping file included a undated note to "Andrea" from "G.P." which notes that an oral interview with a local architect indicates that Gornall moved to Wyoming. A search of the Kansas City (Mo) Star clipping files failed to produce an obituary or any other material. A computer search of Vital Statistics files for the City of Kansas City, Missouri revealed nothing, an indication that Gornall did not die in Kansas City, Missouri.
46. David Boutros, of the Western Historical Manuscript Collection located at the University of Missouri at Kansas City, was able to find plans for the following buildings designed by Gornall. All are for the years 1924-1929 and are commercial/multifamily residential buildings.

S. Brady Real Estate	3613-17 Broadway	(1924)
J. McConnell	36th & Broadway, Hyde Park Hotel	(1924)
Valiant Realty	3619 Broadway, business building	(1926)
Kelley, A.	46th & Main, Apartments	(1926)
McCanles Realty	30th & Forest	(1926)
McCanles Realty	No. 8, Warner Plaza, Hotel	(1926)
McCanles Realty	3245-47 Main, Store/office	(1926)
	3837-43 Main	(1927)
	3039 Harrison, Apartments	
S.L. Meyers	3923-25 Main	(1926)

Metro-Goldwin 18th & Central, business (1929)

The above listing also verifies notations found in the Kansas City Missouri Landmarks Commission research files. In addition to the plans listed above, the Landmarks Commission files also include the following information about Gornall projects:

336 West 36th Street
3035 Harrison

McCanles	46th & Main, #8 3016 Harrison, Apt. Bld. 5930 Ward Parkway	
M. H. Katz	Residence Uptown Theater	(1925)
	4337 Wyoming, residence	(1921)
C.M. Chandler	5827 Holmes, residence	(1929)

47. George Ehrlich, "Partnership Practice and The Professionalization of Architecture in Kansas City, Missouri," Missouri Historical Review 74 (July 1980): 462, 480.
48. HABS No. MO-1892.
49. "Administrator's Report," p. 2.
50. Mobley, A City Within A Park, p. 21.
51. Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide To American Houses, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), pp. 417-419.
52. Determination of the style type of buildings not existing at the time of the HABS photography was based on survey information compiled in 1983 located in the Historic Inventory file of the Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission.

PART IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings:** Drawings for "No 8, Warner Plaza, Hotel" by Robert F. Gornall are part of the architectural collection of the Western Historical Manuscript Collection located at the University of Missouri at Kansas City. Hard copies from microfilm are available on a week's notice.
- B. Previous Photographic Documentation:** Photographs and negatives of a 1983 historic inventory survey are on file at the Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission. City Hall.
- C. Interview:** Boutros, David. Interview by Sarah F. Schwenk. Written notes. Kansas City, Missouri. 6 August 1992.
- D. Selected Bibliography:**
- "About Real Estate." Kansas City (Mo.) Star, 2 March 1924, p. 1D.
- "About Real Estate." Kansas City (Mo.) Star, 18 December 1927, p. 1D.
- "Administrator's Report, Case No. 0063-D," Kansas City Missouri Landmarks Commission, 15 December 1982, pp. 1-4. (Typewritten.)
- Atlas of Kansas City, Missouri and Environs 1925. Kansas City: Tuttle, Ayers, Woodward Company, 1925.
- "A Village of Apartments Arises Almost Over Night," Kansas City (Mo.) Star. 28 October 1923, p. 1F.
- Brown, A. Theodore, and Dorsett, Lyle W. K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri. Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1978.
- City of Kansas City, Missouri Building Permits. Kansas City Missouri Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, Missouri.
- City of Kansas City, Missouri Water Permits. Water Department, Kansas City, Missouri.
- Ehrlich, George. Kansas City, Missouri An Architectural History, 1826-1990 Revised and Enlarged Edition. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992.

C. **Bibliography Continued:**

Ehrlich, George. "Partnership Practice and The Professionalization of Architecture in Kansas City, Missouri." Missouri Historical Review 74 (July 1980): 458-480.

"End To Guy H. M'Canless." Kansas City (Mo.) Star. 14 April 1932, p. 1.

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Fitch, James Marston. American Building The Historical Forces That Shaped It. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966.

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Kansas City, Missouri. University of Missouri at Kansas City. Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Missouri Historical Society.

Kansas City (Mo.) Star. 12 August 1923, p. 2F.

K.C. A Place in Time. Kansas City: Kansas City Missouri Landmarks Commission, 1977.

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Mobley, Jane, and Harris, Nancy Whitehead. A City Within A Park - One Hundred years of Parks and Boulevards in Kansas City, MO. Kansas City: Lowell Press, 1991.

Polke's Kansas City Missouri City Directory. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Company, 1909-1935.

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

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

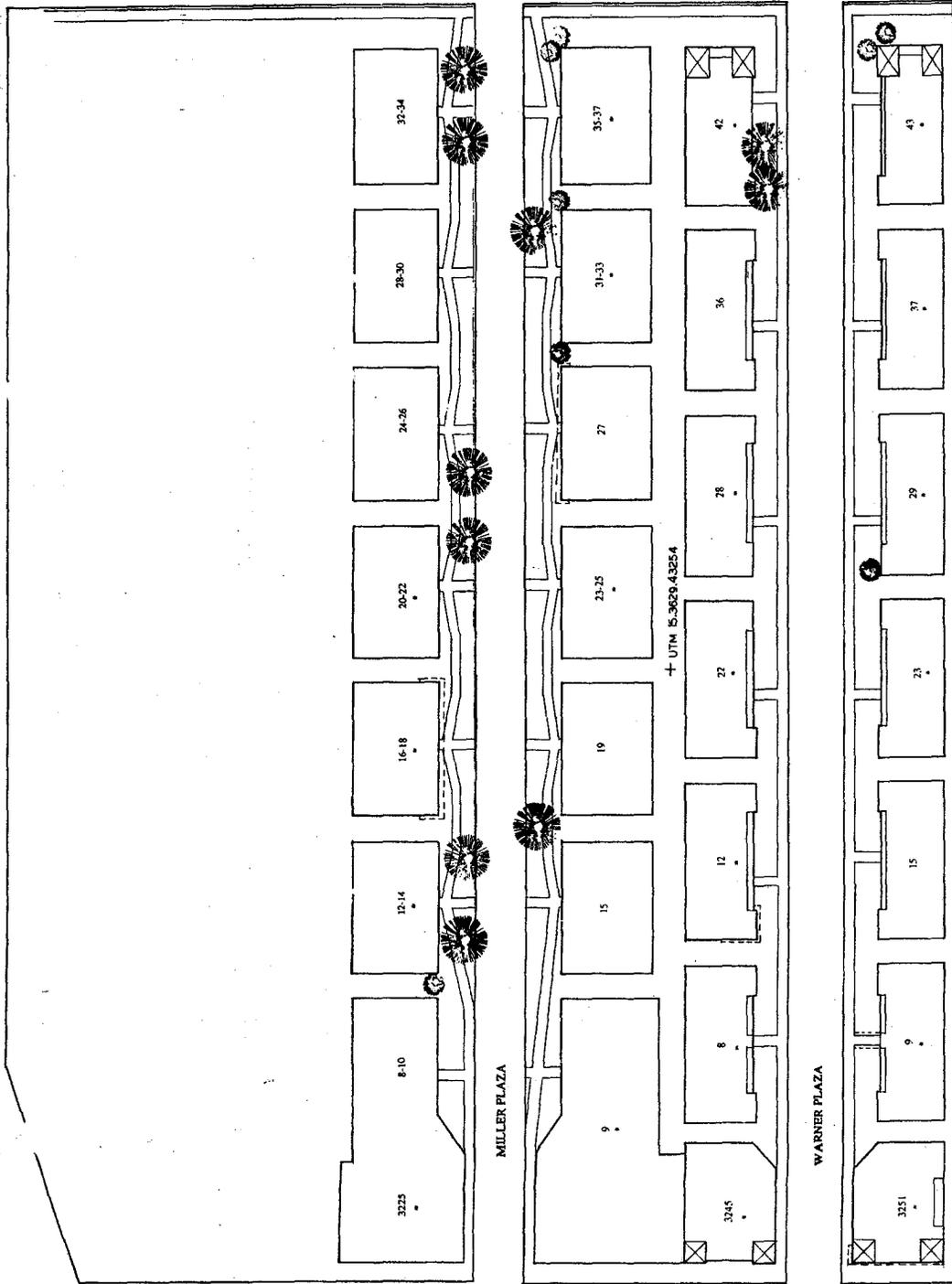
PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

This Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documenting Warner 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 of 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.

MILLER PLAZA AND WARNER PLAZA

MILLER PLAZA WAS DESIGNED BY FRANK D. BROCKWAY AND BUILT IN 1933-34 BY THE MCCANLES-MILLER REALTY COMPANY. ROBERT F. GORNALI DESIGNED WARNER PLAZA, AND THE MCCANLES BUILDING COMPANY CONSTRUCTED IT IN 1936. 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 MULTI-UNIT 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, ANCHORED ON THE WEST END BY MIXED-USE BUILDINGS FRONTING BOTH MAIN STREET AND THE SIDE STREETS.

WARWICK BOULEVARD



+ UTM 15.3629-43254

- * PHOTOS OF THESE STRUCTURES ARE INCLUDED IN THE DOCUMENTATION.
- * PLANTS SHOWN ARE TAKEN FROM THE ACCOMPANYING PHOTOS, BUT WERE REMOVED WITH DEMOLITION OF THE SITE. SPECIFIC PLANT TYPES ARE UNKNOWN.
- * STREET ADDRESS NUMBERS ARE SHOWN ON EACH BUILDING.

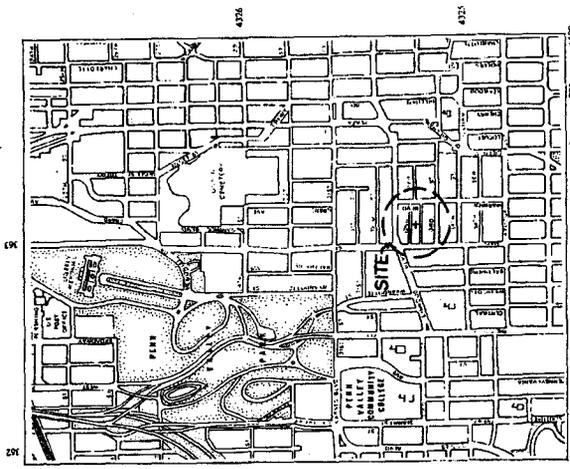
SITE PLAN
SCALE: 1" = 30'

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

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APRIL 2, 1998
VIRGINIA S. LEE

DRAWN BY KEVIN CACY-1992 BOUNDED BY MAIN STREET AND WARWICK BOULEVARD KANSAS CITY MISSOURI HABS No. MO-1693



LOCATION MAP METERS 0 500 1000 FEET 0 500 1000
TAKEN FROM USGS MAP 1964 KANSAS CITY QUADRANGLE UTM 15.3629-43254

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI SUPERVISED THE DOCUMENTATION OF MILLER PLAZA AND WARNER PLAZA IN 1989. THE PROJECT WAS CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT AMONG THE CITY OF KANSAS CITY, THE MISSOURI STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE AND THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION, WHICH REQUIRES THAT A RECORD BE MADE OF THE PLAZAS BEFORE DEMOLITION DUE TO A SHOPPING CENTER PROJECT.

WARNER PLAZA
HABS 1700-1993
(p. 23)