



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

**Mr. Robert A. Long**

Kansas City, Missouri May 13, 1934

We pay tribute today to the memory of a man because the good he has done for our town and country will never end – a man who made dreams come true – tireless, and of fearless courage – achieving day after day for a city he intensely loved.

There is a skyline in the lives of men as there is a skyline in a city. From humble beginnings and lower structures, gradually rise peaks of achievement – leaders of their particular time, dominating their related fields, and a stepping stone to greater things to be.

R.A. Long's life was a long succession of pinnacles of creation. He has hung high many beacon lights in both spiritual and physical things – never surrendering his ideals – never compromising his faith in all his busy career.

We judge accomplishment by comparison with relative surroundings – environment of that period.

First he set a new advance in a great House of Worship.

Then the finest office building of that date, pointing a new goal in our city building.

Steadily and surely directing his great lumber company until it became the largest on earth.

Next our city's finest residence – glorifying his traditional love of family and citizenship.

Soon a hospital – evidencing his heart and soul, never failing in responsibility and service to his fellowmen.

Later Longview Farms – beautiful – practical.

Support of missionary work throughout the world.

The establishment of a great Cathedral at our nation's capital.

The building of a model city at Longview, Washington for his employees – abounding in his gifts for schools, hospitals, parks, playgrounds and churches.

And then his wonderful leadership in our campaign after the War to memorialize the service of our men and women in that great world conflict. None of us who labored under him at that time can ever forget his tireless effort; his inspired consecration to the debt we owed. He insisted our memorial should have no thing of utilitarianism – must breath only love and gratitude – lest the ages forget.

From seven thirty in the morning until midnight through those grueling weeks of toil – he lifted our vision – he kindled our hope – he fought for America’s greatest and most expressive war memorial. His advanced age, even then, knew no fatigue – his imagination no bounds. Modest in his own great part – I well remember his stout protest, with tears in his eyes, to the unanimous vote of our Board of Governors, for the placement of his name on our central shaft.

It is with deep regret that he could not be spared until the present memorial structure and beautification of the grounds now under way could be completed.

Yes, the good he has done will never end – peak after peak will ever live in our memories. Thousands are better men and women just because we knew him – all our plans will be higher because of his unending influence.

The silhouette of his life will eternally cast its deepening shadow of hope, courage, sacrifice and service from shore to shore across our land and into the lives of a multitude of people who loved him, admired him and were proud to follow his glorious leadership.

Great forest trees will enshroud and tenderly soften the lines of this memorial – alluring paths will wind through abundance of shrub, flower and vine – sparkling water will sing in our fountains – the human story on our frieze will reach many tongues – meetings of patriotism and civic devotion will be held within this hall – multitudes will study the relics of methods of war of the beginning of this century as shown herein, and forever shall the cloud by day and the flame by night recall to generations yet to come, the beautiful and sweet mosaic pattern of the life of that great citizen, R.A. Long – mellowed and endeared – seen from afar standing out in bold relief in the history of Kansas City – and through all these years, the angels aloft on the tower will stand guard to glorify such men and women who served their city and country in time of peace as well as in time of war.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN026

Arguably Jesse Clyde Nichols (1880-1950) was the single most influential individual to the development of metropolitan Kansas City. Moreover his work, ideas, and philosophy of city planning and development had far-reaching impact nationally – so much so that the Urban Land Institute has established the J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionary Urban Development to recognize a person or a person representing an institution whose career demonstrates a commitment to the highest standards of responsible development.

Nichols’ objective was to “develop whole residential neighborhoods that would attract an element of people who desired a better way of life, a nicer place to live and would be willing to work in order to keep it better.” The Company under Nichols and his son, Miller Nichols (1911- ), undertook such ventures as rental housing, industrial parks, hotels, and shopping centers. Perhaps the most widely recognized Nichols Company developments are the Country Club District and the Country Club Plaza Shopping Center, reportedly the first shopping area in the United States planned to serve those arriving by automobile rather than trolley car.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) contains both personal and business files concerning J.C. Nichols' private and business life. Included are personal correspondence, family related material, and speeches and articles written by him. Business and financial files pertain to actions of the Company, including information about different developments and the securing of art objects; and printed materials produced by and about the Company.