

Clarence Kivett

Architect

1905-1996

by Susan Jezak Ford

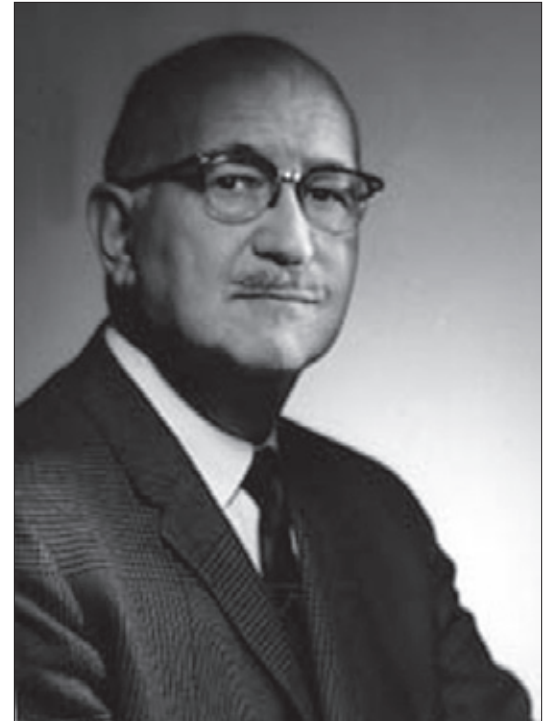
Clarence Kivett is often credited with bringing modern architecture to Kansas City, not just in the buildings that he designed, but in the numerous architects that he trained. His firm, Kivett and Myers, designed dozens of Kansas City landmarks, including Kansas City International Airport, the Alameda Plaza Hotel (now the Ritz-Carlton,) and the Truman Sports Complex.

Born Clarence Kivovitch, Kivett's family moved to Kansas City when he was a year old. Shortly after graduating from the University of Kansas in 1928, he changed his name. Kivett's first employer fired him in 1931 due to lack of work during the Great Depression. He decided to open up his own office and for awhile took small remodeling jobs. His first big commission came when his uncles, Ike and Mike Katz, asked him to help design a drugstore with the firm of Frohwerk and Bloomgarten. The Katz Drugstore at Main and Westport Road was a very modern design in 1934. The art deco store design contains a distinctive clock tower that was influenced by work at the Chicago World's Fair.

Ralph Myers joined Kivett as a partner in 1940. The firm has contributed numerous buildings to Kansas City, as well as the rest of the world. The firm is responsible for many well-known structures, such as the State Office Building at 13th and Holmes, Temple B'nai Jehudah at 69th and Holmes, Spencer Chemistry and Biological Sciences Building on the UMKC campus, and airports in Munich, Germany, and Lisbon, Portugal.

Kivett and Myers was known as a training ground, providing instruction to young architects who eventually began about 50 new firms. Kivett encouraged bold, modern buildings designed by quality architects. The firm also received more than 200 design awards before merging in 1975 with HNTB Architects.

Kivett was active on many local boards, including the Kansas City Plan Commission, the Municipal Art Commission and the Kansas City Art Institute's board of directors. He died in 1996 at the age of 91.



Sources

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