

Sid J. and S. Herbert Hare

Landscape Architects

Sid (1860-1938); Herbert (? - 1960)

by Daniel Coleman

Whether strolling the grounds of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art or campus of the University of Kansas, appreciating the layout of Mission Hills and the Country Club District, or paying respects at Forest Hill Cemetery, most Kansas Citians have experienced designs of Sid J. and S. Herbert Hare. As the work of this father and son evolved from engineering to urban planning, their careers reflected the development of the modern American approach to building great cities.

Sidney John Hare was born January 26, 1860 in Louisville, Kentucky, son of Christopher and Isadore Bethurum Hare. The family moved to Kansas City when Sid was 8, and he spent his childhood watching the rapidly growing city devour his beloved prairie wildflowers, creeks and woods. After receiving his diploma from Central High School and completing special post-graduate courses in surveying and trigonometry, Hare was hired by the City Engineer's Office in 1881. On August 27, 1885, he married Mathilda A. Korfhage of Kansas City, and the pair had two children—a daughter Nellie and a son, Sidney Herbert.

Although he had received excellent instruction in Kansas City's public schools, Sid Hare was self-taught in a variety of subjects. Natural history and botany were his biggest interests, and during his work in the City Engineer's Office he gravitated toward the prominent landscape engineer George E. Kessler, whose Parks and Boulevards Plan for Kansas City, drawn up in the 1890s, sought to transform the city's rough edges into an environment of functional beauty. Hare learned much from his renowned mentor, and is credited with playing a key role in Kessler's development of the scenic Cliff Drive.

In 1896, Hare took a new position as Superintendent of Forest Hill Cemetery, at 69th and Troost—grounds on which he could realize his botanical visions. Establishing himself as a national figure in the new field known as "landscape architecture," he left the cemetery in 1902 to go into business as an independent designer and consultant.



Meanwhile, Sid Hare's son Herbert had grown up receiving frequent, hands-on lessons in horticulture from his father and instruction in freehand and mechanical drawing at Manual High School. From 1908-1910, Herbert Hare studied at Harvard University's School of Architecture under Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., son of the pioneering landscape architect who designed New York City's Central Park. When he returned to Kansas City in 1910, Herbert Hare joined his father's firm.

The duo's work was now driven by a broader philosophy of comprehensive community planning, in which "the modern suburban addition must be a resident park . . . where landscape, art and nature are combined." They put their ideas into action in the employ of one of their biggest clients, J. C. Nichols, designing some 2,500 acres of his Mission Hills and Country Club District neighborhoods. The firm was also hired by lumber baron Robert A. Long to plan the town of Longview, Washington.

In the decades that followed, Hare & Hare designs were implemented in 28 states, including extensive planning in Houston, Texas, and signature projects like their redesign of Point Defiance Park in Tacoma, Washington. Although its associations with John F. Kennedy's assassination often eclipse its aesthetic merits, Dealey Plaza in Dallas is another Hare & Hare creation.

Sid Hare died October 25, 1938, and his son passed away two decades later in April, 1960. Combined, the lives of father and son encompassed an entire century of enjoying the beauty of the natural world and striving to involve it in our living spaces.

Sources

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