

Adriance Van Brunt

Architect
1836-1913

by Susan Jezak Ford

Adriance Van Brunt was one of Kansas City's earliest and most supportive believers green space. His work as a founder of the park and boulevard system and a member of the city's first active Park Board made him an active player in the "City Beautiful" movement.

Born in 1836 in Englewood, New Jersey, Van Brunt (no relation to Henry Van Brunt) came to Kansas City in 1878. As he organized his architectural firm with his brother, John, in the early 1880s, Kansas City was beginning to look like a real city.

The firm of A. Van Brunt and Co. received numerous commercial and residential commissions. Many commercial buildings were located along principal streets, such as the Harvey Dutton Dry Goods firm at 802 Broadway and the Bond Shoe Building at 312 W. Eighth Street. Residential designs encompassed many styles. Those still standing include the B. T. Whipple residence at 4538 Warwick and the Edward Dickinson home at 810 W. 52nd Street.

Upon his arrival in Kansas City, Van Brunt worked on various civic campaigns. He was appointed to the first active board of park commissioners by Mayor Benjamin Holmes in 1892 and toured the boulevard systems of several East coast cities with August Meyer in 1893. When they returned, the Park Board began negotiations for scenic roadways in Kansas City. As a prominent architect, Van Brunt often walked a fine line between the good of the city and the wishes of his clients, many of whom requested boulevards in front of their properties.

Van Brunt continued to work in the city's interests after he resigned from the Park Board in 1902. He designed several park buildings, such as the entrance to Swope Park in 1904 and the utility building at 39th Street and Gillham Road. After the 1908 flood in the West bottoms, Van Brunt successfully recommended that the area be used as a warehouse district.



Van Brunt's public service was rewarded one week after his death with the designation of Van Brunt Boulevard, one of the city's best known thoroughfares.

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