

Albert Isaac Beach

Mayor of Kansas City
1883-1939

by Nancy J. Hulston

Albert I. Beach served as mayor of Kansas City from 1924 to 1930. Under his administration, a new city charter was voted in that established a city manager form of government for Kansas City.

Beach was born on July 30, 1883, in Olathe, Kansas. He graduated from the University of Kansas in 1905, and received his law degree from Washington University, St. Louis, in 1907. Beach moved to Kansas City in 1908 and worked as a lawyer. An outgoing and personable man, he soon became popular in political circles. Beach was elected to the lower house of the city council from the fifth ward in 1910 and the fourth ward in 1912. He was elected mayor in 1924 as a reform advocate.

The new city charter that also abolished the two-house city council had been secretly backed by Thomas J. Pendergast, the boss of the Democratic machine in Kansas City. In a meeting with William T. Kemper and other civic leaders, Pendergast dictated that his friend, Henry F. McElroy, a former county judge, would be the new city manager.

When Henry F. McElroy, took office in 1926, Beach's power as mayor was greatly limited. McElroy, a Democrat, moved into the mayor's office, while Beach was relegated to a tiny room on the 26th floor of city hall. Undaunted by the loss of status, Beach continued to work behind the scenes on projects that he felt were important to the growth and success of Kansas City.

Significant accomplishments during Beach's tenure included the development of the City Planning Commission and the Zoning Board, both vital in keeping check on the rapid growth of the city. The new municipal airport, bringing Kansas City into the aviation age, was built under Beach's tenure. A new building for General Hospital No. 2 was also built, replacing the run-down facility for African Americans on Hospital Hill.

Retired from politics, Albert I. Beach died on January 21, 1939, at the age of 55.



Sources

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