

George Kessler Collection

Included in this collection are many landscape drawings made by landscape architect and planner George Kessler. They are mostly non-Kansas City related, but rather are world-wide in scope.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: George Kessler
Title: George Kessler collection
Dates: 1895-1923
Size: 1 box, 2 microfilm reels
Location: SC32

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access: Unrestricted access.

Additional physical form available: 19 photographic negatives of drawings.

Reproduction note: Kessler/Kansas City Park Board correspondence available only on microfilm.

Location of originals: Kessler/Kansas City Park Board correspondence originals at the Kansas City Department of Parks and Recreation archives.

Related collections in other repositories: George E. Kessler Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri. (A grant from the William T. Kemper Foundation of Kansas City provided for the processing and filming of this 19,000 page collection and insured that Missouri Valley Special Collections received a copy of the microfilm.)

Acquisition information: Unknown.

Custodial history: This is an artificial collection relating to George Kessler which contains items found in the department. The microfilm reels came from the department's microfilm collection and the drawings were originally in the library's Art and Music Department.

Citation note: George Kessler collection (SC32), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Collection Description

Biographical/Historical note

George Edward Kessler was born in Bad Frankenhausen, Germany in 1862. He began his career in the United States in the latter part of the 19th century. His first project in the local area was a railroad excursion park in Merriam, Kansas. He is credited with the Park and Boulevard System design and the City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City, Missouri. At the turn of the 20th century he began doing work in St. Louis, Missouri, including design work for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904. He died in 1923.

Scope and content note

This collection includes 22 sheets with 16 distinct landscape drawings primarily done by George Kessler, dated 1910 - 1916 and covering not only Penn Valley Park and North Terrace Park in Kansas City but also projects in other places as China, Oklahoma City, Indianapolis, St. Joseph, and St. Louis. There are also a few drawings by other people, including W.H. Dunn, who was at one time head of the Kansas City Board of Park Commissioners.

All of the drawings are reproductions and have been photographed with the negatives housed with the collection. Also included are two microfilm reels of official correspondence to and from the Board of Park Commissioners. The first reel (1897-1899) is general correspondence. The second reel (1895-1917) consists principally of legal opinions for the Board, many of them written after Kessler's tenure there. These two reels of microfilm are held in the same box as the drawing reproductions.

The drawings were arranged as a classed booklet before processing and titled "Landscape Architecture, 1910-1916." The George E. Kessler Papers are available in the Missouri Valley Special Collections department on 34 reels of microfilm, located in the Missouri Valley Room open stacks microfilm drawers. The originals are housed at the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis, Missouri. Also available within the department is an online biography of Kessler as well as numerous entries for him in the Local History Database and in the index to the newspaper clippings collection.

Collection Inventory

Drawings

- Willard Park, Indianapolis, Indiana - 1913
- Park Plan, Memphis, Tennessee - 1914
- Northeast Park, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma - n.d. - Prepared by W.H. Dunn, Landscape Architect, Kansas City, Missouri
- Trosper Park, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma - n.d. - Prepared by W.H. Dunn, Landscape Architect, Kansas City, Missouri
- Southwest Park, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma - n.d. - Prepared by W.H. Dunn, Landscape Architect, Kansas City, Missouri
- Shanghai Baptist College and Theological Seminary, Shanghai, China (4 sheets) - n.d.
- University of Nanking - 1912 - Cady & Gregory, Architects - New York
- Miami University Campus, Oxford, Ohio - 1913
- Lincoln Park, Pittsburg, Kansas - n.d.
- Garfield Park Garden, Indianapolis, Indiana - n.d.
- Prospect Park, St. Joseph, Missouri - 1912
- State Park, Gonzales, Texas - n.d.
- Penn Valley Park, Kansas City, Missouri - 1910
- North Terrace Park, Kansas City, Missouri - 1911
- Rose Polytechnic Institute, Terre Haute, Indiana (2 sheets) - 1916
- Clayton-Skinker Intersection, St. Louis, Missouri - 1913

Microfilm - 2 rolls

- Roll 1 - George Kessler Personal Secretary, circa 1897, Book Cover, page 1, through and including "Letters from to" YZ index page, end book cover

- Roll 2 - Board of Park Commissioners Legal Opinions, Book Cover, ABC Index Page, through and including Ordinance Record No. 2, Board of Park Commissioners, Kansas City, Missouri, page 606, ending book cover

Processed by Special Collections Librarian Sara Nyman, August 1992.