The highest aspiration of the noblest soul, whether for themselves or for the country, has ever been peace. When the youth abandons the parental roof, when the missionary departs to foreign lands, the choicest blessing is “Peace be with you”.

But lo! as we scan the page of history, what so boldly stares us in the face? Upon every turn it is war, and “war to the death.” Picture if you can that war swept world, torn by strife and contention - that complex mass of wars and intrigues - wars involving deadly destruction and atrocious crimes - intrigues bearing sorrow and desolation to every fireside.

Here, beneath the bright and sunny sky are “bands of brothers, children of a common father”, struggling together in deadly conflict, in the frenzy of unbridled passions, with the madness of ferocious beasts, brother murderously slaying brother, earth plowed with cannon, fields strewn with the mangled bodies of men and beasts, wounds, agony, despair – death a happy relief! Hatred and vengeance overcome love and mercy. Force holds supreme sway. Reason is forgotten, progress fettered, justice shunned as if an evil. Shuddering, in amazement we ask, why this dire combat? Dismally, mournfully, comes the reply - this is the established method of determining justice between nations. Yea, nations in all their grandeur, in all their ruin, have constantly wrapped themselves in the throes of war, the deadliest enemy of peace. The world’s history is a history of wars. But peace, the supreme command of God, has lived in the souls of men. Christianity, gaining and advancing in its powerful sway, touching the hearts of the people, drawing together the better faculties of man, has cultivated love and gentleness. Private wars have ended. Public wars have become more rare.

Yet, do not nations blindly uphold the barbarous war system of centuries past? Is not the established method of determining justice still the same? Alas! this is but too true. The peace of nations today is but an armed peace - the armaments far greater than they were a century ago. Governments apply a most unjustified proportion of their time, strength, and revenue to the maintenance of their war systems, the fallacious means established for determining justice.

Continents quiver from sea to sea with the tread of mighty armies. Annually four millions of men are called from peaceful avocations to learn the trade of mutual slaughter. Indeed, the enormity of the expense of armed peace is incomprehensible. In every other trend of human affairs, expense is barrier to progress. For the support of this established tribunal alone, “wealth is poured out like water.”
Ah! when will governments learn the lesson that wisdom and justice in policy are a stronger security than the weight of armaments? Will nations ever enjoy perpetual peace and will there ever come a time when they shall war no more? Considering the present wars of Europe and the vast armaments of nations, truly it appears of evanescent dream.

But, listen - “There is a growing sense of justice combined with a growing might of public opinion, that would maintain the judgments of august tribunals, assembled in the face of nations, better than all the marshals of France, better than the bloody terrors of Austerlitz or Waterloo.” The commingling of nations by the telegraph and the newspaper, by navigation and the locomotive is effecting the change of altruism for egoism. Brutal force cannot remain the arbiter of enlightened nations. During the present century, over sixty controversies, that heretofore would have led to war, have been satisfactorily determined by international arbitration. Arbitrational clauses now enter all treaties. Each year do nations the more resort to it; each year do they the more abide by its decisions.

When this grand reformation shall attain its realization, when government shall determine all differences by arbitration and international congresses, when nations shall universally disarm and better employ the billions yearly lavished upon the war system, then will the dissolved human family be reunited in perpetual peace. Then will the nations be the united nations and cease to fall. We shall furl the lion and the leopard and raise the twig of olive. Poets and painters, and old warriors, too, will cease to celebrate the “pomp and circumstance of glorious war.” “The busy click of machinery, the merry ring of the anvil, the lowing of the peaceful herds, the song of the harvest home, will be sweeter music than the paeans of departed glory or the songs of triumph in war.”

Peace will render our chaos, a world of industry, safety, and prosperity.

The dreams which nations dream come true;  
And shape the world anew.  
And down the happy future runs a flood,  
Of prophesying light:  
It shows an earth no longer stained with blood,  
Blossom and fruit, where now we see the bud  
of brotherhood and right.

May we, “Class of ‘97,” enjoy this perpetual peace. May this long desired and much coveted goal now attained after eleven years of hopeful toil, be the commencement of fourteen successful lives.

For the citizens of this beautiful city, who have made it possible for us to reach this goal, we can entertain nothing but the kindliest feeling. Nor can we forget our endeared instructors who have so faithfully and patiently guided our venturing course on the past widening sea of knowledge.

To-night, we have come together for the last time, around the beacon light of our past school days and gaze far out on a broader and more perplexing deep.

Tides of thought roll in around us refreshing the memories of the happy past wherein progress was realized and foundations laid, illuminating the vivid present - our
ambitions high - aspirations lofty, perhaps each expecting too much success and too little failure - each with an unstained past, confident of resisting the temptations of the future. Upon the highest tides are dreams of the future. Ah! if we could foresee all our vicissitudes and final fates. But only hope is given as our impulse and right as a true standard. As the world moves on, the more there is to entice but the more there is to ennoble. Temptation, vice and treachery are on every hand, but Christianity, morality and wisdom are the stronger.

We have prepared our beginning, let us ever strive with untiring zeal for a noble end.

As classmates we now must part, but whene’er we meet we meet as friends.

May peace and honest fame be a reality - not a dream - to the “Class of ‘97.”

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN001

Arguably Jesse Clyde Nichols (1880-1950) was the single most influential individual to the development of metropolitan Kansas City. Moreover his work, ideas, and philosophy of city planning and development had far-reaching impact nationally – so much so that the Urban Land Institute has established the J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionary Urban Development to recognize a person or a person representing an institution whose career demonstrates a commitment to the highest standards of responsible development.

Nichols’ objective was to “develop whole residential neighborhoods that would attract an element of people who desired a better way of life, a nicer place to live and would be willing to work in order to keep it better.” The Company under Nichols and his son, Miller Nichols (1911- ), undertook such ventures as rental housing, industrial parks, hotels, and shopping centers. Perhaps the most widely recognized Nichols Company developments are the Country Club District and the Country Club Plaza Shopping Center, reportedly the first shopping area in the United States planned to serve those arriving by automobile rather than trolley car.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) contains both personal and business files concerning J.C. Nichols' private and business life. Included are personal correspondence, family related material, and speeches and articles written by him. Business and financial files pertain to actions of the Company, including information about different developments and the securing of art objects; and printed materials produced by and about the Company.