Plaza Association
Kansas City, Missouri  Fall 1934

Plaza most beautiful, clean, orderly, best arranged shopping center in the world.
Best free parking stations.
Most accessible by boulevard, trafficways, carline, and bus line.
Widest sidewalks; widest streets; beautiful fountains; vases and flowers.
More conveniently grouped together than can be found any place in the world.
Crowds increasing year by year.
Restaurants doubled.
Bank accounts 33 1/3% increased in past year.
Largest suburban theatre crowds.
Power and Light Co. 2000 more people.
Kansas City Gas Co. increased almost as much.
Plaza activities.
Splendid group of merchants and employees, surpassing any other group I know, and a great landlord interest and help.

Plaza Association doing better and more effective work than any organization of its kind in America. A splendid group of merchants devoting their time in a wonderful manner to all committees to which they are appointed.

There is no limit to what the Plaza Assn. can accomplish in building trade for every merchant if everyone does his part.

A fine group of merchants – less jealousies, criticisms, and less backbiting than in any other group.

No hermits are wanted in the Plaza. The man or woman who never intimately associates with his fellow merchants gets into a rut, and the only difference between a rut and a grave is that a grave has two ends and a rut goes on forever.

I notice that the merchants who do not attend the luncheon meetings; the lectures and other meetings, and do not take any part in other Plaza activities, are the ones who get behind in their rent. Despair and suicide frequently comes to those who live alone, but joy of living and prosperity come to those who love people, make friends and are enthusiastic in their contacts while striving to serve their fellow men.
We do not want merchants in the Plaza who give the customer the blues; we do not need just fair weather merchants; we need those who are strong, alert and able to override all obstacles. We want merchants who will get in the band wagon and sing and work together rather than be content to ride in the hearse.

Our out of town trade is growing rapidly.

Plaza is becoming well known for hundreds of miles in all directions in surrounding towns and cities, and it is becoming the smart thing to have bought something at the Plaza.

Emporia story.
The Plaza should be one big department store.

Refer business to your competitor, and keep trade in the Plaza.

Plaza is as strong as its weakest link.

Any merchant who offends a customer may destroy forever a Plaza customer. Any merchant who makes one new well-satisfied customer paves the way for every other merchant to gain a new customer. Yes, we have a wonderful opportunity. It is our united responsibility to bring the Plaza to many times its present size.

We have only scratched the surface. There is no limit to our possible growth. If we all get our heads and hearts working; get the united support of every employee in the Plaza; we can have many institutions here as large as any to be found in the city, and in all of this each employee is just as important as the owner of the shop. Many an employee may become a proprietor.

With all of these opportunities what are the things we can do to bring greater business for all of us?

First, study our merchandise and supply the needs of our buying public.

Be alive and study changes in fashion – anticipate certain needs. Read style-trade magazines, etc.

Let everyone know that they can always find what they want in the Plaza. Broaden your wares as rapidly as feasible.

Help our company get the few types of stores which are not yet represented in the Plaza. Such additional stores will help every one of you.

Improve our sales methods, and this I believe to be the most important task of all of us. We have made customer surveys – spent yesterday calling upon merchants, and every one of the suggestion I am making is the result of the comment of a customer of yours or your fellow merchant.

First, let me refer to some of the physical aspects of the Plaza. One dark show window in the Plaza is as unsightly as a missing front tooth in the mouth of a beautiful woman. Dolan dark room – gloom spells despair – light breeds cheerfulness and success.

One dirty, or unattractive window can nauseate your nearby fellow merchants’ best customer and drive the trade away not only from your own shop but from all of your neighbors.
Dirty fingerprints on the windows; dust on the sills; dead flies on the bulkheads; poorly arranged merchandise, or the same old thing in the window week after week, will drive away trade from the whole block. Lack of color harmony in a window display; lack of adaptation to seasonal affairs; lack of adaptation to a particular season, is simply poor merchandising. One awning down in the front of a shop at night while all the other awnings are raised gives a messed up appearance and detracts from the entire block.

A poorly lighted window when hundreds of people are looking into your windows is a lost opportunity.

There are increasing crowds of people on the sidewalks at night and a constantly increasing number of customers are being made for you while you sleep if your awnings are up; your windows attractive and your merchandise effectively displayed the year around.

Parking cars at the curbing.
Unclean rears of your stores.
Sloppy appearance of interiors. Loose papers on your counters, untidy top of your desk.
All these things create disrespect for your store.
Carry bundles to car.
Help stalled car.
Give nickel to use phone – story.
Don’t interrupt conversation.
Be tactful in adjustment in handling returned goods.
Don’t ever say “What can I sell you?” “Something today?”
“Do you wish to buy a pair of shoes?”
Better say after a pleasant “Good morning” and “How is the baby?” “May I serve you?” “May I help you?” “Is there something I may show you?”

More specific in answering enquiries about other locations – Boyd Shade story
Information Booth story.
Opportunities to get inquiries into store.
Particularly every clerk should know bus schedules; Post office hours; taxi rates and all other service matters.
Offer to look up telephone numbers.
Do the things not expected to do, etc.
Clerks should know about Eleanor and Myra – why?
Clerks should know about bridge tickets and all bulletin items.
Post bulletins.
Post employees on complete information on all new goods. Tell them all you know.

Take out one article at a time – don’t leave too many lying around, they only confuse the buyer.

Get the customer seated wherever possible to relax, avoid hurrying – better concentration.

Don’t ask size – don’t ask how old
Don’t ask color
Don’t ask price range
Don’t ask if she wants to try it on
Be alert to watch facial expression, etc., to know when customer is pleased
Don’t be a negative salesman
Don’t ask questions that can be answered “no.” Be positive.
Be good closers – customers slow to say yes – call for fitter? Don’t talk customer out of sale.

Pack goods carefully.
Never alibi – don’t pretend to know – why.
Never criticize anything a customer already owns.
Never intimate customer cannot expect satisfactory goods at the price she has in mind.

There is a far better way to get this idea across.
Never impose yourself on a customer with whom you get along well.

Fashion Lane Story.

Don’t urge a garment which customer thinks does not look well. Mrs. N.
Don’t be putting away stock while still waiting on customer.
Never make fun of a customer’s inquiry – Cookoo clock.
Return money with a smile.
Don’t throw a package at a customer.

Never urge a customer to ask for you – never force yourself on a customer.
Always show deference to a friend accompanying a customer
Miss Harvey, etc., bought her hose at a certain shop just because she liked the girls.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN027
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.