Today begins National Foreign Trade week, and Kansas City and this territory with some two hundred of its factories, and thousands of farms around us supplying goods for foreign consumption, and hundreds of stores selling articles imported from remote corners of the world, is vitally concerned.

Everyone is deeply interested in world commerce – when you eat your meals, put on your clothes, walk about your homes, ride in your cars, go to your work, you come in contact with hundreds of articles from far-off countries. Your breakfast coffee from Brazil, sweetened with sugar from Cuba; silk in your clothes from Japan; rubber tires from distant India; manganese in your flashlight from abroad, linseed oil in the paint in your home from Argentina – and even your lowly chewing gum brings up memory of bare, brown bodies, glistening with sweat as native boys in tropical forests of Mexico or Central America go about their work collecting chicle.

From the time the Pilgrim Fathers landed, our country has prospered from foreign trade, and today with transportation by airplane; streamliner and fast ship, and communication by radio and cable, no country can isolate itself.

In our splendid city in our great interior, everyone is directly touched by foreign trade. All cities around our coast belt are foreign trade conscious – they’ve learned that is the way for them to grow, and so are expanding their export and import trade.

Located in the Missouri River Valley with immense surplus of farm products, we are in crying need of foreign markets. In this great city we have hundreds of manufacturers who wish to give more daily income to thousands of employees. Our factories need new lifeblood – new arteries through which a stream of international trade may flow. Even a 10% increase in output of our industries may mean the difference between loss or profit – perhaps the wiping out of depressing surpluses of stocks. One small spark of foreign trade can easily burst into a mighty flame of progress for this whole area.

We are in fighting competition with coastal cities as well as the country east of the Mississippi and north of the Ohio rivers where manufacturers enjoy freight rates some 25% less on basic materials, and we must demand our rightful correction.

Foreign trade, since the decline of ‘31 which so prolonged the depression, is increasing again in rapid strides – three and a half billions in the year ending June 1, 1938, a 22% increase in one year. This is a challenge to the men of our city, and this territory, to grapple with the complexities of foreign trade and do battle together to bring to our part of this nation our fair share of this enormous world trade.
The terrific upset of political conditions of the world at this very hour spells new opportunity for every farmer, every businessman, and every professional man throughout our region.

Let’s not forget that almost straight south of us – reached by our fine railroads, river barges, and faster ocean liners, live more than a hundred million excellent people in rapidly growing Latin America, our logical friends and customers with whom there exists opportunity for greater business and cultural relations which may prove the salvation of the independence of the western hemisphere, in the world conflict, by tying together all these nations in closer trade relations enabling all of us to maintain our position throughout the world as a united people demanding peace as to war and peace as to trade.

I urge all of you to join the cause of foreign trade week in Kansas City; let’s arouse a new interest – let’s face new opportunities, and recognize a mighty dawn of progress leading to greater prosperity and happiness for Kansas City and our broad trade territory.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN059

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.