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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

MAY 19 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Memphis Park and Parkway System

B. Associated Historic Contexts

The City Beautiful Movement and Community Planning 1900 - 1927/1939

Work of George E. Kessler (1862-1923) 1901-1914

C. Geographical Data

All properties are located within the incorporated limits of the City of Memphis, Tennessee

[X] See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Herbert L. Harper — Signature of certifying official

5/11/89 — Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer/Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Amy Schlagel — Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

July 3, 1989 — Date

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

I. THE CITY BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT AND COMMUNITY PLANNING 1900-1939

In the mid to late nineteenth century many people began to urge the development of parks and planned landscapes within urban areas. Landscape Architect Frederick Law Olmstead's Central Park design was one of the most famous examples from this period, and it helped inspire a national park and boulevard movement in the 1870's. The proponents of the movement advanced the concept of closely juxtaposing urban and rural environments in order to improve the quality of urban life. The movement received a new focus after the Chicago World's Fair Columbian Exposition in 1893, where, utilizing a well defined plan based on accepted architectural and landscaping principles, grounds and buildings were carefully blended to present attractive vistas. The effect was so striking and popular that the Exposition soon became known as the "White City."

The City Beautiful Movement built on the old parks and boulevards movement by incorporating large public buildings and Monuments, often Neo-Classical in design, into park-like settings. It also emphasized street furnishing which up to then had been more common in European cities - fountains, ornamental benches, statues, and memorials. The City Beautiful Movement was primarily aimed at improving the aesthetics of cities rather than attacking social problems as earlier and later reform movements did. By 1900, it was the dominant theory in the emerging field of city planning. Professionals contributing to the movement included Horace W. S. Cleveland, George E. Kessler, John Nolen, Charles Elliot, the Olmstead Brothers and Daniel Burnham. These designer-planners shaped the cities where they worked, and were pioneers at the forefront of planning theory of their day.

☒ See continuation sheet

Most City Beautiful plans have roots in the plan developed for Paris by Baron Haussmann in the mid-19th Century, and in the urban landscape concepts developed by Olmstead some twenty years later. In the United States, this influence is seen in the 1902 McMillian Plan for Washington D.C. and in the 1909 Chicago Plan by Daniel Burnham. The seed of metropolitan-scale public planning is also visible in the 1883 plan for a park system in Minneapolis by Horace Cleveland; in the 1893 Kansas City boulevard and park plan by George Kessler; and in the vision of landscape architect Charles Elliot and writer Sylvester Baxter, who from 1890 on worked to establish a regional park system in the Boston metropolitan area. Due to efforts such as these, American urban park acreage doubled around the turn of the century.

In most cities, the realization of a park system was tied to years of citizen advocacy. However, the challenges and opportunities of developing municipal park systems must have differed considerably in cities like New York and Memphis. The City Beautiful Movement in more sophisticated cities emphasized municipal art, public spaces and other cultural amenities. The plans for Memphis and Kansas City were aimed at shaping large areas of undeveloped land and enhancing the development potential afforded by new transportation links into the suburbs. In both cases, however, it was mainly a middle and upper class movement and remained so for many years.

Writer Charles Mulford Robinson widely promoted the City Beautiful movement through his numerous articles and books, including The Improvement of Towns and Cities, or the Practical Basis of Civic Aesthetics (1901), and his widely read Modern Civic Art, or the City Made Beautiful (1903). In this later book, Robinson stressed the values of comfort and well being along with aesthetics. Unfortunately, most civic leaders were more taken with the civic boosterism that could be garnered by beautification projects.

During the 1890's through the turn of the century German concepts of town extension planning (Stadtebau) were promoted by German planner Joseph Stubben, who attended the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 and addressed the International Congress of Engineers on the preparation of town plans. Many American planners and landscape architects visited Europe and studied planning practices and advances being made in Britain, Germany and France. It was primarily during the first and second decades of the 20th century that German ideas, particularly those of comprehensive planning

and zoning became standard in the American vocabulary.

In the United States, as in Germany and Britain, planning grew within the context of a municipal reform movement, also known as the progressive movement. It took longer for planning to become institutionalized within municipal government in the United States, but between 1909 and the start of World War I, more and more cities established planning commissions and looked to ways to control the quality of development. Although there was a growing awareness of the need for government to provide urban services and regulatory controls, most planning commissions were ineffective, did not see their plans implemented, and held little actual power over public or private property.

The City Beautiful Movement began to decline after 1904, the year of the St. Louis Worlds Fair. Concern gradually shifted to social considerations, and aesthetics was increasingly seen as only one of several requirements which needed the be met through public planning. This change was influenced by the settlement house movement to improve urban neighborhoods, housing, and sanitation, and was advocated by social reformists such as Jacob Riis and Jane Adams. It influenced those working in planning, but the housing and planning movements grew apart as most planners worked for the business and monied classes, who were primarily interested in protecting their property values, and saw in planning a means to do that.

In 1909 the Plan of Chicago was published by Daniel Burnham. The same year, the United States Supreme Court indicated that it would probably uphold the use of police power to control building heights. The first National Conference of City Planning was held in Washington in 1909, and there, the participants' interest was clearly directed to functional areas like zoning, transportation, recreation and housing. Technical planning was in vogue for the next twenty years, and zoning gradually became the hallmark of the trade, taking the place of earlier efforts to develop a more comprehensive and socially conscious approach.

Over a period of time, the suburban boulevard or parkway came to be conceived in terms of a self-contained uninterrupted stretch of road, possibly landscaped, and provided with recreational facilities. The Bronx River Parkway in New York (1907) first defined this concept of a road intended primarily for recreation, and secondarily for transportation. Its key features were the

natural setting, scenic vistas, landscaping and pull off points for parking, picnics and pleasure. According to the National Resources Board, recreation accounted for 60% of road use by 1933.

LOCAL CONTEXT:

The beginning of city planning in Memphis is similar to that of many other American cities. In 1819, the city founders, John Overton, James Winchester, and Andrew Jackson laid out a grid street pattern which included a series of four public squares: Auction, Market, Exchanged (Bickford) and Court, which were adjacent to the Mississippi River. In 1828 they deeded to the City a 36 acre promenade along the Mississippi River bluff from Jefferson Avenue south to Union Avenue. Throughout the 19th Century, the City allowed development on the promenade, although the founders bequest was to retain this area for walking and leisure. Parts of the Promenade were later acquired and developed by the Memphis Park Commission.

Memphis developed in an unconstrained fashion throughout the 19th Century. The City government was reluctant to get involved in planning or public improvements up until the devastation of the yellow fever epidemics in the late 1870's when it went bankrupt and lost its charter on January 31, 1879. It was not until the construction of the Waring sewer system and a public water system in the 1880's that the first infrastructure improvements were undertaken by the City to benefit the public.

Due to the necessary concentration of effort and expenditure in building a sewer system, at the end of the century, Memphis still had only a meager six acres in parks, and no major cultural facilities. In comparison, Kansas City had a nearly complete park and parkway system, St. Louis had the 1,300 acre Forest Park, and Atlanta had 153 acres of parks.

When Memphis recovered its Charter in 1893, it entered a period of growth and civic pride. Under Mayor John J. Williams, a progressive elected in 1897, the city quickly moved to annex outlying suburbs, increasing its area by four times, and providing the framework for ten years of major public works and growth. Even though Memphis lagged behind other comparable cities, her

leading citizens were not unaware of the great park systems being developed elsewhere. Judge L. B. McFarland had urged the development of parks as early as 1889:

> Other needs besides mere police and paving must be attended to. It is to one of these needs this paper is directed, that of public parks... It may be said that no city will be greatly populous or truly great without proper provision for the pleasurable and the aesthetic. Pleasure grounds and places of amusement are as much of a necessity to the health and happiness of a people as pavements and sewers. (Commercial Appeal, December 29, 1889)

In the late 1890s Memphis responded to the City Beautiful Movement by initiating a program to expand its park system. In 1897, in a Memphis City Council Meeting, Mayor Williams appointed a committee to pursue this goal, and in November, 1898, he appointed a second committee to seek special park legislation from the State to allow Memphis to issue bonds for $250,000 and to give condemnation authority to park commissions to acquire park lands. At this same Council meeting, landscape architect John C. Olmstead, stepson of Frederick Law Olmstead, was present. He advised that promising areas for new parks existed to the east at Lea Woods, and on the Mississippi River south of the city.

In response to Memphis request, the Tennessee Legislature in March of 1899 passed a bill authorizing major cities to establish three member Park Commissions with control over parks, park lands, and parkways acquired under the terms of the law. These commissions were given broad powers to develop and maintain these areas. Under the act, the City of Memphis appointed Judge McFarland, John R. Godwin, and Robert Galloway as its first Board of Park Commissioners in September, 1900. McFarland was appointed Chairman. Prior to this time the City Council had jurisdiction over the existing parks. In 1901, this group arranged for a $250,000 bond issue to develop the park system. The Memphis Park Commission was the first such body in Tennessee to successfully develop a major urban park and parkways system under this law.

During its early years the Park Commission corresponded with the Olmstead Brothers firm, but based on correspondence, it does not appear that the firm was directly involved with developing plans. When the Park Commission was ready to hire a landscape architect in November, 1901, the Olmstead Brothers submitted a general bid,

as did George E. Kessler of Kansas City, who was in Memphis and arranged to meet with the Commission. At this meeting, Kessler, a highly respected landscape architect, was hired for three years at a salary of $5,000 for the first year and $2,000 for the two subsequent years. By now, the decision to upgrade the few existing parks, develop two new major parks, and build a parkway had been made. The locations of the two new parks were fixed with land acquisition underway and a general route had been selected for the parkway.

The work of the Park Commission in the first few years was two-fold: improving existing parks and acquiring new parklands. When it was formed in 1900, five existing parks came under its control: Bickford Park, Market Square, Auction Square, Exchange Square (Brinkley Park), and Forrest Park. During the early 1900's, other park lands were acquired or donated and put under the Park Commission, including Gaston Park, Court Square, Confederate Park, along with Overton Park (NR 10/25/79), Riverside Park and the Parkway. The Park Commission envisioned them as a system, as is seen by this statement by Chairman Robert Galloway in the 1908-9 Park Commission Annual Report:

> A city of 600,000 inhabitants should have a central playground, two or three large parks with from 400 to 600 acres, and a small park in each ward: (and) a boulevard system connecting up the parks with the parkways into the city.... (p. 15)

In the following years, the Park Commission continue to add parks to its system such as the thirteen acre DeSoto Park in 1911, Douglass Park in 1913 (the City's first black public park) and the 120 acre Galloway Park in 1923.

The Commission's main priority in the early years was to acquire land for two new major city parks. These parks were the 427-acre Riverside Park on the banks of the Mississippi River south of the downtown and the 335 acre Lea's (Lee's) Wood (later renamed Overton Park) on the northeast side of town. Chairman McFarland travelled to Nashville where he arranged to purchase Lea's Wood in November, 1901 for $110,000 from the Overton family. Soon afterwards, the Park Commission acquired a 367-acre tract south of the city limits, which included a high bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. Shelby County donated an additional sixty acres and these two tracts made up Riverside Park.

After the acquisition of Riverside and Overton Parks, the Park Commission turned its attention to a major component of its park system, a U-shaped Parkway that was to connect the parks and make them accessible to citizens from all areas of Memphis. The Parkway was designed by Kessler with a wide right of way with a broad planted central median and borders along most segments. It was conceived as a linear park, with three main routes on the north, south east and sides of the city. The entire system took almost ten years to acquire and complete.

In the course of its development as a city agency, the Park Commission acquired many of the functions of a Planning Commission, which it held until 1920, when the Memphis City Planning Commission was established. In making decisions about locations of the parks and parkways, the Commission influenced the future form and direction of growth. It was widely believed that Parks and Parkways attracted residential development, as is seen in this early advertisement for the Evergreen subdivision:

> In the process of development in every large city, large parks are created, and since these large parks covered with forest trees are a perpetual guaranty of fresh air and clean surroundings, the neighborhood ... becomes exceedingly desirable, and therefore, greatly in demand for fine residences. No matter where the fashionable district was before ... only a few years are required to make the change to the immediate neighborhood of the parks or the broad park thoroughfares leading to them.. ... the residence district of the future is certain to be the neighborhood adjoining Overton Park and along the magnificent Speedway now being constructed to connect Overton Park to the heart of the city... (F.W. Faxon and Co.- Commercial Appeal, 3/4/06)

In light of its role in stimulating such development, it is appropriate that in 1909 the Park Commission was given the power to review subdivision plans. In addition, it was frequently requested to plant and maintain upscale suburban "parks", including Belvedere Boulevard (Central Gardens Historic District, NR9/9/82)and Fountain Court, which it did, assessing property owners accordingly. The City also requested the Commission to plant and maintain city grounds, hospitals, and schools.

Although in the early years the Commission had a policy (recommended by Kessler), to refuse requests to maintain property it did not control, after 1910, under Mayor E.H. Crump's administration it acquiesced to requests to plant street medians and grass "neutral strips". By 1940 the Commission was responsible for maintaining many of these, as it still does today. This legacy is seen in the large number of landscaped street medians, boulevards and highways in Memphis, which can be described as a discontiguous secondary parkway system. They include early 20th Century residential streets such as Tutwiler, Belvedere, Stonewall, La Clede, York, Kenilworth, Wellington, and Fountain Court. A 1940 listing of Park Commission properties includes these medians, as well as a list of "five triangles and circles."

(see continuation sheet)

The period after 1920 brought the addition of many parks to the Park System. One of the largest was Galloway Park, which was acquired in 1923. This park, was deeded to the City by developer H.W. Brennan, who gave the City 120 acres of a 256 acre tract. The remainder of the tract was developed as an exclusive residential subdivision. Galloway Park was in the center of the development, and included a golf course and other recreational facilities. Other neighborhood parks added to the system during this period included Astor, Church, Booth, Klondyke, Orange Mound, Peabody, Winchester and Williamson Parks.

Over the years, most parks were improved with cultural and recreational facilities. For example, the Brooks Museum and the Zoo were constructed by the Park Commission in Overton Park, Golf Course Clubhouses were built in Overton and Riverside Parks, Community Centers in Gaston Park and DeSoto Parks, and bandstands or pavilions were built in almost every park the Commission owned. Annual contracts for public music to be played in the parks were bid out by the Park Commission, making the parks a more complete cultural experience. During the Depression years, a number of improvements to city parks were made using federal funds, including the construction of Overton Park Shell by the WPA in 1936, and Gaston Park Community Center in 1934.

In addition to developing urban and neighborhood parks, the Commission developed or received from the city or subdivision developers many smaller mini-parks, including Belvedere Triangle at the intersection of Belvedere and Madison, and three small parks (which apparently no longer exist) in the Annesdale Park subdivision. Today, the park system is basically intact with smaller parks as well as Riverside Park and Overton Park being utilized by residents of the City.

In conclusion, the parks and parkway system developed by the Park Commission between 1900 and 1939 was a significant contribution to the growing 20th Century city. Developed over a forty year period, it incorporated and then moved beyond the ideals of the City Beautiful Movement into early concepts of Community Planning. Conceived and administered as one complete system, it provided recreational and aesthetic amenities to the City and stimulated residential development. It represented a major step by the City to provide basic amenities for its citizens. Many of the earlier components were designed by landscape architect George Kessler who

established a high standard for Memphis parks and parkways which lasted through the public works era of the post-Depression, and is with us still today.

II. Work of George E. Kessler (1862-1923)

George Kessler (1862-1923) was born and trained in Germany in landscape design, forestry, and engineering. Part of his youth was spent in Dallas, Texas, and he returned to the United States after completing an his education in the excellent German technical schools. Kessler spent a short time working under Frederick Law Olmstead on Central Park in New York, and then moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where he took a job as Superintendent of Parks for the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Gulf Railroad. His first work was to design a railroad excursion park in the town of Merriam, Kansas, which received high acclaim.

For most of his professional career, Kessler worked in Kansas City and other medium sized midwestern cities undergoing rapid growth. The undeveloped character of these cities allowed Kessler to engage in large scale engineering and planning, particularly on the suburban fringes. Beginning with the Kansas City Park plan, his work shows a transition from landscape engineering to city planning. In his later years, he participated in the laying out of a "new" city in Longview, Washington, and developed a plan for Dallas, Texas.

Kessler's first major project was to develop a park system for Kansas City. The report he produced for the Kansas City park board in 1893 was more than just a simple system of parks. It included an analysis of the city's topography, traffic patterns, population density, growth and industrial and residential land uses. His main intent was to propose new parks, but he included arguments that parks served to define and divide the city into separate land uses. He saw a planned system of boulevards as offering a framework for development, and as a way to attract good residential development:

> The object of boulevard construction is two-fold...to provide agreeable driveways, and ... to make the abutting land ... especially sought after for residence purposes. (Board of Park and Boulevard Commissioners, Kansas City Mo., (1893) p.

29).

Essentially, Kessler put forth the basic planning concept of guiding and encouraging development through infrastructure extension and public amenities. This was an important trademark of his work in Memphis, Dallas and Denver.

The Kansas City Park system was an extensive boulevard system connecting North Terrace Park, on the Missouri River east of the downtown, to Penn Valley Park to the south and west, just beyond the City limits. Within this framework were a number of smaller parks, some connected to and some entirely separate from the boulevards. One elaborate feature was the Paseo, a nine block boulevard that contained a formal sunken garden, fountains, and the Pergola - a multilevel, block long, double Colonnade with a trellis roof. Most of the boulevards were 100 feet wide with 40 foot roadways flanked by thirty feet of parkway, planted in trees and provided with walks.

In laying out the boulevards in Kansas City, Kessler followed the existing north to south street grid which was perpendicular to the river. This approach was distinct from the popular radial and diagonal street plans which were being proposed in many cities at the time. Kessler's plans show a practical approach, also seen in the plans for the Memphis Parkway System, which gave a sound basis for street planning and expansion and made future development comprehensible.

Kessler's plan for Kansas City was contemporary with the famous plans for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair Columbian Exposition. Like his contemporaries he developed designs for public spaces and buildings, but he also planned for undeveloped suburban terrain. And Kessler saw his work as encompassing more than just parks. Writing to G.B. Dealey of the Dallas News in 1910, he stated that in his view, the study of a city for park affairs "includes the pleasure highways and the smaller local embellishments, (and) embraces every planning or structural activity within a city". He went on to assert that "no one department can plan without having to have full knowledge of all matters relating to the others", and in all the cities he had worked in, he had been involved in all aspects of municipal planning.

Kessler was one of several noted landscape architects who made a contribution to the development of the Denver Park and Parkway

System. The beginnings of a system were in place in Denver at the turn of the century, but it was not fully articulated or designed until the publication of Charles Mulford Robinson's 1906 report for the Denver Art Commission and Kessler's subsequent 1907 map. The system proposed by Robinson and Kessler was implemented over the next twenty years. It acknowledged and utilized the existing grid system as a foundation, and covered the entire city as well as extending into the suburbs. Like all of Kessler's earlier work, this plan recognized natural features and topography and brought beauty to the much maligned grid.

The Denver System consisted of three circulatory parkway systems, which reached east, south and north like the arms of a windmill. They connected and incorporated parks, and were connected with each other by the Cherry Creek Corridor. Kessler's 1907 map was published by the Denver Park Commission. The Robinson-Kessler plan was the first comprehensive design for the entire city to be articulated and implemented, and it served as the guide for the development of Denver's park and parkway system and provided the foundation for future city plans. Sixteen boulevards and parkways and fifteen parks in the Denver system have been nominated to the National Register. (The Denver Park and Parkway System, NR Nomination, 1986)

Kessler's work in Dallas incorporates planning concepts which by 1910 were superseding the aesthetic concerns of the City Beautiful movement. The Dallas plan was published by the Park Board in 1911, and it focused on physical improvements for visual attractiveness, the city's transportation system and the development of a park and boulevard system. Kessler addressed the need for the city to be "divided into areas and zones each devoted to its own particular purpose", although he did not propose zoning. He also addressed the problems of the Trinity River flooding and problems created by haphazard development. (A City Plan for Dallas, Dallas Park Board, 1911).

As in the Kansas City, Memphis and Denver plans, Kessler proposed a park and parkway system in Dallas which generally followed the existing grid street pattern. His proposals included an "inner system" plan for the park needs of the established city, and an "outer system" plan for future needs. The latter was a boulevard plan which Kessler encouraged the City to use as a tool for directing proper future growth and development. He made recommendations for residential thoroughfares and streets and

included in his report sample cross-sectional drawings for streets. He did not recommend a subdivision ordinance, but encouraged adherence to a street subdivision plan and for the city to use its powers to control development on private property. (Campbell, 1978)

In addition to parkways, Kessler addressed the need for neighborhood and school playgrounds in Dallas. He stated that local parks should be within walking distance of user's homes, but that the parkways could also serve as local parks without interfering with vehicular movement. He also addressed how the plan could be implemented through taxation, special assessments and the power of eminent domain. The most notable result of his park and boulevard plan was the construction of Turtle Creek Boulevard. In addition, four of his Dallas parks were eventually developed: Reverchon, Forest, and Kidd Springs, and White Rock. (Campbell, 1978)

Kessler's other work included park and city plans for many cities in the United States, as well as in Mexico City and Manilla. He also made plans for cemeteries, subdivisions and educational institutions, including Miami University (Ohio), Mississippi State Normal, Missouri State University, Baker College and Washburn College, to name a few. Kessler is still best known for the Kansas City plan, although he worked in many other cities including Memphis, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Syracuse, Denver, Dallas Houston, Salt Lake City, Fort Worth, Pensacola and Indianapolis. The remarkable fact is that so many of his plans were implemented during his lifetime, an accomplishment considering the number of city plans shelved during the City Beautiful era and since.

As a consultant, Kessler traveled constantly and he relied on competent local agencies to implement the plans. The Memphis Park Commission, in this respect, was crucial to the development of the Memphis System.

The Memphis **Parks and Parkway System:**

Kessler was employed to work for the Memphis Park Commission in November, 1901. The Commission had asked for general proposals to "lay out and supervise improvements to the several parks of Memphis." Kessler was in Memphis, and was invited to attend the meeting. He was hired immediately thereafter under a negotiated

contract for three years, for which he was to be paid $5,000 in the first year and $2,500 in the two subsequent years. For this, he was to furnish within the first year:

> ... maps, plans and drawings of the several parks, including complete preliminary grading and planting plans and for all walls, bridges, terraces, walks drives and buildings of every character and also plan for such boulevards and drives connecting said parks as the Commission may require and also give his personal supervision of such work as may be done within the three years. (MPC Minutes, Book 1 p.10).

Two weeks after this meeting, Kessler was present at another regular meeting of the Park Commission, where engineer James E. Hildebrand was hired to draw up a survey of all the park lands as preliminary to the final plans of Kessler. Kessler needed a survey to develop the plans since he resided and worked in Kansas City or St. Louis when he was not traveling.

It was not until December, 1902 that plans from Kessler were received by the Park Commission. Plans for a pavilion in Riverside Park, a proposed route for the Parkway, and for Riverside, Bickford and Gaston Parks are mentioned. In February of 1903 he submitted plans for Riverside Park bridges and drives, and in August, walks and a water system plan were received for Forrest Park. In November of 1904 Kessler's contract with the Park Commission was extended for two additional years at $2,000 per year. A year later, in December, 1905, mention is made in the minutes of a report submitted by Kessler to the Commission which recommended the widths of the Parkways.

Extant plans by Kessler for the Memphis Parks and Parkway System include plans published in the Commission's annual report for July 1907 to June 1908. This report includes plans for Riverside Park, Overton Park, Forrest Park, Bickford Park and Gaston Park. All are attributed to Kessler. It also includes plans which are not attributed to Kessler for "an open air forum" at Court Avenue and the Riverfront, proposed for the area just south of Confederate Park. A striking before and after photograph showing the site where Confederate Park was developed does not attribute the design of this park to anyone, though its formal design is similar to Forrest Park.

The similarities between the Kansas City parkways system and that of Memphis are striking. Both are perpendicular to a river and both reinforce the existing street grid pattern and make it comprehensible. Unlike Kansas City, the Memphis Plan does not have elaborate gardens, but the orientation of both is to the suburbs, and in both, the parkways are functional and scenic corridors. They take full advantage of the natural scenic beauty provided by forests, open space, and river views. There is nothing like the Pergola in the Memphis Park plans, which may reflect a practical move away from "City Beautiful" preoccupations with Neo-Classical aesthetics. The curvilinear street and path systems in his parks are reminiscent of Olmstead.

The 1908-1910 Park Commission Annual Report contained a report from the Landscape Architect. In it Kessler praised the Park Commission and favorably compared Memphis' efforts to other cities. He urged development of a riverside drive along the Mississippi River, "with its wonderful possibilities of characteristic scenery." Supporting this proposal is a 1909 Map which shows the Park and Parkway System, with a proposed parkway from Riverside Park along the river connecting to North Parkway. It also includes a proposed parkway where present day Danny Thomas Boulevard lies - and what appears to be a circular rail line around the city. These proposed parkways were never built by the Park Commission, and today show few similarities to the earlier system.

Entries about Kessler and various park plans and proposals continue in the minutes until 1914. Frequently the Commission would resolve to ask Kessler to come to Memphis and look at a park and to bring his plans for it. The same parks come up over and over again in the course of several years as the Commission decided to make additions or dealt with problems in developing them. Kessler appears to have been involved in much of the supervision of the department, and as late as 1908-9 he was recommending that playground apparatus be purchased for Forrest Park and while in Memphis, he helped lay out stakes and plans for landscaping the Riverside Park pavilion.

In his later correspondence with the Park Commission and in the 1908-9 Park Commission Report, Kessler urged the development of planned playgrounds, particularly in connection with public school

grounds and at the site of the Southern Railway yards, an eyesore which the Park Commission attempted to acquire for years. It was during this period that playground equipment for neighborhood parks was installed by the Commission.

In 1909 Kessler wrote a letter to Cyrus Garnsey, Jr., General Manager for the Galloway Coal Company, and a partner with Robert Galloway who served on the Park Commission. His letter reflected concern with the Park Commission's Annual Report, and particularly that he was not adequately represented in it. Garnsey's reply acknowledged political problems, related to the rise of Edward H. Crump, who was attacking the programs of the current Mayor, John J. Williams. Kessler's "Landscape Architect's Report" was in the final published report of the Commission, but his influence was waning with that of the progressives.

With the advent of the Mayor Crump's rule in 1910, Kessler's influence declined as the Park Commission adapted to the authority and interests of the new administration. In June of 1911, Kessler was in Memphis to inspect the site of the new proposed Parkway through New Memphis Land Company property. The Commission resolved at that time to develop the new parkway only if funds came available. Crump opposed any major new spending by the City, and began trying to control the Commission's activities. He asserted that Memphis had enough parks, and that other matters should take precedence.

Kessler was paid $2,000 in 1912, which is the last payment noted in the minutes. The last reference to Kessler is in February of 1914. He provided a blueprint for the development of the newly acquired DeSoto Park, and at the same time, a plan was submitted by Park Commission Superintendent Charles Davis and his engineer. Commissioner Robert Galloway resolved to hold the matter until Kessler could be there and discuss it. This incident may have precipitated the end of the relationship between the Park Commission and George Kessler.

In 1920, Kessler made a a bid to the new Memphis City Planning Commission to develop a plan for Memphis, but the contract was awarded to Harland Bartholomew and Associates. In his proposal to Chairman Wassell Randolf, Kessler stressed several important planning concepts which reveal his methods. He encouraged use of other specialists where necessary, including legal, zoning and engineering consultants. He strongly maintained the importance of

an "educational campaign", which was concurrent with the plan so that there was broad understanding and support for implementation. Finally he stressed the value of maintaining continuous guidance by one person and on-going planning as he had done in Kansas City and Memphis in earlier years.

Despite losing his bid for the city plan in Memphis, Kessler was widely recognized and respected by his contemporaries in the planning field. He was a charter member of the American Planning Institute, formed in 1917, which included Harland Bartholomew, Alfred Bettmen, John Nolen, Frederick Law Olmstead and Edward H. Bennett. He was posthumously recognized along with other early planners by the American Planning Institute in 1927. His contributions are visible in his work, which reflect the evolution of planning out of related fields. The Memphis Parks and Parkways System reflects this transition which Kessler achieved in Kansas City and Memphis.

In summary, early components the Memphis Park and Parkway System are significant as examples of the work of landscape architect and planner, George E. Kessler, who contributed to the development of community planning ideas in Memphis between 1901-1914. Kessler's work in Memphis appears to be based on his previous work in Kansas City, where he incorporated the aesthetic concerns of the City Beautiful Movement with the social concerns inherent in the earlier Parks and Boulevard movement and urban reform movement of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. It also demonstrates his approach to guiding suburban development through public amenities, especially parks and connecting parkways.

F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type Parkways and Secondary Boulevards

II. Description

The multiple properties listing includes a category of associated property types which include parkways and secondary landscaped boulevards. These roads are characterized by their dual functions as part of the urban transportation system for pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and their planned aesthetic or recreational function, intended for beautification and public enjoyment.

(see continuation sheet)

III. Significance

The Memphis Parkways and other secondary boulevards are significant under National Register Criterion A because of their association with the City Beautiful Movement and the development of city planning concepts in Memphis 1900-1939. National origins for these property types go back to the work of Landscape Architect Frederick Law Olmstead, who promoted the integration of nature into the urban setting through parks and boulevards. In Memphis, this was expressed in the work and plans of the Memphis Park Commission and their Landscape Architect George E. Kessler.

(see continuation sheet)

IV. Registration Requirements

Parkways and secondary landscaped boulevards which are located in the City of Memphis city limits can be eligible if constructed between 1900 and 1939. Additionally, they must be associated with the Memphis Park Commission, the City Beautiful Movement or Community Planning during the significant time period. Works after 1914 should show the direct influence of earlier movements in their design and through historical association. Many of the parkways built prior to 1914 have a close association with George Kessler becuase he designed or helped implement them.

(see continuation sheet)

[X] See continuation sheet

[X] See continuation sheet for additional property types

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

[x] See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

[x] See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- [x] State historic preservation office
- [x] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [x] Local government
- [ ] University
- [x] Other

Specify repository: Memphis Landmarks Commission

I. Form Prepared By

name/title Cathy Bruner, Preservation Planner
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The characteristics of these roads are similar, although their actual design may differ. In each case, planned landscaping is used to enhance the roadway and the surrounding area. In some cases, existing plants and trees have been utilized, while in others, a more formal planting plan may be seen in rows of trees or groupings of certain kinds of plants. The landscape plan is defined by the use and scale of the roadway and whether it serves a large area, as do the Parkways, or a residential street.

A parkway is a scenic transportation corridor characterized by the dual functions of a roadway and a scenic recreational route. Usually, a parkway encircles or serves to connect important points within the city, and for this reason, it is not neighborhood specific. A central landscaped median is a common feature of a parkway, but there may be adjacent land dedicated for landscaping along the sides as well. Parkways also take advantage of natural scenic beauty, which may be combined with planned landscape design, parks and vistas. The main characteristics are the intended purpose of a scenic, recreational as well as a functional road.

Landscaped Boulevards, secondary roads and streets are defined as neighborhood specific collectors or streets that have a wide central median dividing two sides of the road. The median contains plantings, and is an integral part of the neighborhood setting. It is public rather than private in nature. It usually extends for three or more blocks, and may be broken along the way to provide access across the street. The boulevard may also have trees, plantings and pedestrian sidewalks on each side within the public right of way. (This does not include unplanted medians or "neutral strips" which are much narrower and do not contain plants).

The Parkways can be considered eligible under Criterion C, as the work of George E. Kessler, landscape architect and planner. The importance of Kessler's work in the field of planning lies in the contributions he made in his work, which synthesized and incorporated the ideas of the City Beautiful Movement, the Parks and Boulevard Movement, and the growing role of municipal governments in planning and directing private development in new suburban areas.

Kessler's first major work in Kansas City was followed by Memphis. As a "built" plan, the Memphis System is an example of the work of a master in this new field at the beginning of the century. It exemplifies the planning theories of Kessler (of which landscape design was only one component). Kessler's involvement in the Memphis System is documented in Park Commission minutes, annual reports and correspondence.

Prior to the establishment of the Park and Parkway System, Memphis had no major public improvements that incorporated aesthetic or natural amenities into the urban environment. Between 1901 and 1914 the Parks Commission and Kessler established a standard for development in the suburban fringe of the city which lasted through the Post Depression era. This work was significant too for its impact on shaping private sector residential development. Many streets throughout the "Midtown" area of Memphis were provided with planted medians, which formally incorporated trees and plantings into neighborhoods, and established a humane and attractive setting.

Development of parkways continued through to the beginning of World War II. The New Deal public works era brought a number of major public works projects which incorporated the park and boulevard concepts at the national, regional and local levels. The development of the Hudson River Parkway in New York and others are examples of this continued tradition.

Integrity of association and feeling is paramount for the resource type. Properties must have been developed by the Memphis Park Commission or the City of Memphis, or must have been deeded to the City through subdivision dedication during the period of significance (1900-1939), and have been maintained by the Park Commission or City. At minimum, they must be significant in the area of community planning and must show characteristics of planned landscape roadways.

The level of significance will generally be local. However, additional research on the broader theme of urban planning in Tennessee and Kessler's works throughout the United States may reveal that some properties have state or national significance.

Evaluations of integrity should be based on the continued original use and the continued existence of the original roadway dimensions, including rights of way, natural scenic qualities, setting, medians, plantings, or improvements such as lighting, curb and gutters, sidewalks and other original features. Some portions of the system/road may have had alterations (planting, new widths, or right of way), but this will only be a small portion of the road.

If a resource has undergone alterations, these must be visually in character with attributes of the original resource in order to be considered contributing. If only part of an original resource remains intact, it may be eligible if it is sufficiently complete to be viewed as a cohesive entity and if it retains the physical and associative qualities which make the property type significant.

Each subcategory of the property type have similar origins, and as such, are considered related. The Memphis Parkway System is considered a single district, distinct from the secondary system. The secondary system developed in response to the parkways and was built largely by developers of subdivisions. Such streets would be regarded as individual structures or as contributing parts of related neighborhood districts.

F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES: Parks and Related Park Improvements.

II. Description:

Parks are a second major classification of property types included in the multiple resource nomination for the Memphis Parks and Parkway System. Parks have a unique and separate function and distinct design qualities which are shared as a group apart from parkways and scenic roads. Parks are planned open natural spaces designed for recreational and leisure activities by the public. They generally have planned landscape design, including plantings, walks, paths, roads, statuary, artwork, buildings and recreational facilities. They range in size from under one acre to over 500 acres or more.

III. Significance

The parks developed by the Memphis Park Commission between 1901 and 1939 are significant in the area of Community Planning and Development because of the lasting contribution these facilities made to the quality of life in Memphis from the turn of the century to the present. They are related to the growth of a national parks and boulevard movement, which began in the 1870's and which continued for over fifty years. Due to the devastation of the yellow fever epidemics in Memphis in the 1870's, Memphis was behind other similarly sized cities in developing its park system. It responded to the need for public parks during the City Beautiful era, and has continued to develop the system since that time.

IV. Registration Requirements

The physical requirements for eligible parks includes public lands owned by the City of Memphis Park Commission which have open space and improvements that are used for recreation. These parks are planned facilities, designed to incorporate a means of access by the public, walks, landscape plan, open space, playgrounds, amenities such as roads and bridges, golfcourses, lighting, street/park furniture, statuary, benches, and buildings or structures which serve a recreational or cultural function. The recreational function may be passive, active or both, and the plan may take advantage of natural scenic landscapes, or be formal in design.

Parks under the jurisdiction of the Memphis Park Commission are publicly owned and maintained, having been acquired by purchase, donation or through other means. They can generally be classified in one of three groups which differ in intended use. Large urban parks, such as Overton Park were designed for use by the public at large as well as tourists. Neighborhood parks such as Gaston and Peabody Parks were intended for recreational use by residents from a specific neighborhood or part of the city. The third type, formal or ornamental parks were intended for passive or cultural activities and to beautify the urban setting. Court Square and the Belvedere Triangle are of the ornamental variety. In a few cases, these functions may be combined, as is the case with Forrest Park, which incorporates all three functions.

The early parks developed by the Memphis Park Commission between 1901 and 1914 were primarily designed by the Commission's landscape architect George Kessler. They combine the Olmstead tradition of naturalistic landscape design with some of the more formal elements which came out of the City Beautiful Movement's Neo-Classical traditions. Common to most are curvilinear walks or roadways, informal, naturalistic groupings of plantings and trees, often left in their original locations, use of naturally occurring scenic vistas and settings, and a careful balance of trees and open space. Formal parks such as Forrest, Court, and Confederate Parks use naturalistic landscape design with more formal walkways, statuary and street furniture.

Each park was planned to serve a unique function within the overall urban context. Overton Park appears to have evolved along the lines of Fairmont Park in Philladelphia, with a multifaceted identity as a park for passive and active recreation, cultural offerings and formal scenic characteristics. Hence, it offers forests, a zoo, museum, music amphitheater, golf course, picnic grounds and formal walks and statuary. In contrast, Gaston Park was designed as a neighborhood park, with informal walks, play areas, picnic table, and a community center. Thus, the resource and its intended function dictated the final plan, although the use evolved over time depending on the demands placed upon the site.

Most of the early parks were developed by the Memphis Parks Commission between 1901 and 1914. Later additions to the system

were made in the 1920's as well as numerous physical improvements to the parks themselves. Some of these parks were deeded to the city by suburban developers and others were acquired. The development of the parks were part of an overall effort by the city to provide essential recreational and natural amenities to a growing city. The system is largely intact today and continues to be maintained by the Park Commission.

The development of the park system can be significant in the area of recreation and social history because it represents the growing role of local government in providing for the welfare of citizens by developing parks for leisure activity, play, and recreation. Prior to the development of the park system Memphis had six acres of park land and no neighborhood or large urban parks. The boom in residential development in the city after 1890 resulted in an expansion the east and south of downtown. The Park Commission through its work helped set a higher standard for urban development which improved living conditions for many different social groups in both old and new sections of the city.

The parks which are eligible for listing under the multiple properties context can be significant under criterion A for their association with events that have made a significant contribution to broad patterns of our history, especially in the field of community planning and development. Several parks are significant under criterion C as the work of George Kessler, who drew plans for several of the early parks developed by the Memphis Park Commission between 1901 and 1914. These parks will be the best extant examples of his planning theories and Kessler will have been directly involved in implementing the designs (either by documented on-site visits, written documents or post-original plans).

The parks developed by the Park Commission in the first decade were either deeded to the Commission by the City or were purchased. Plans for these parks and the parkway were developed by George Kessler, who provided plans for both the large and the smaller parks in the system, including Riverside, Overton, Gaston, Bickford and Forrest Parks. In addition, the Park Commission developed Confederate Park and the public squares which had been part of the original bequest of the founders of the City, including Court, Market, Exchange and Auction Squares.

The Park Commission clearly conceived of the park system as a hierarchical one, with the major parks serving an urban population, and the small neighborhood parks serving surrounding residential developments. The Commission continued to add parks to its system, including DeSoto Park, Douglass Park (for the Black residents who were not permitted to freely used other parks), and Winchester Park, which was formerly the city's oldest cemetery before being taken over and redeveloped by the Commission. The larger parks were eventually connected by streetcar lines and

offered cultural amenities such as golf courses, a zoo, museum and other activities. The smaller parks tended to offer playgrounds, community centers, and other youth-oriented facilities.

Other city parks developed by the Park Commission after 1914 included Astor, Belvedere, Church, Peabody, Morris, Klondyke, Litty, B. F. Booth, Orange Mound, and Williamson Parks. These parks were neighborhood parks in both affluent and poorer parts of the city and they were intended to provide recreational facilities for children and youth, as well as a green and natural areas in the urban environment. They usually had playground equipment, wading pools and softball diamonds, as well as picnic facilities, walks and landscaping. They ranged from 1 to 20 acres, whereas the larger urban parks tended to be over 100 acres in size.

During the Depression, the City used federal work relief programs to expand its parks and recreation facilities. The Works Progress Administration (WPA), Public Works Administration (PWA) and Civil Works Administration (CWA) helped fund and build a number park improvements, including Gaston Community Center, Overton Park Shell, and improvements in Riverside Park and Overton Park Zoo. These additions added to the overall use and enjoyment of the facilities, and are considered contributing elements in the parks due to functional and associative characteristics.

By 1940 the Park Commission claimed to own 1,500 acres of parks and playgrounds, including: 27 white parks, 7 Negro parks, the parkway, and five triangles and circles. Within the parks and on various school grounds were Park Commission operated facilities, including 32 playgrounds, 5 swimming pools, 7 community centers, 3 golf courses, 21 wading pools, 50 tennis courts and 30 softball diamonds among others. The Overton Park Zoo, Memphis Museum (The Pink Palace, NR 7/9/80), Brooks Art Gallery, the Fairgrounds, Crump Stadium and a nursery of 50 acres to supply shrubs and plants to beautify the parks were also managed by the Park Commission. By 1940, the city budget gave four cents out of every tax dollar collected to the Park Commission, and they employed 250 persons.

The requirements for registration are based on a knowledge of the condition of existing properties. Where the original plans are available, they should be evaluated based on the original plan. Otherwise they should be evaluated based on stylistic similarities to other related properties, on early photographs and other historical evidence. Frequently early improvements and amenities built by the Park Commission were lost or replaced. So long as the essential landscape plan is extant and intrusions have not seriously altered the character of the property, it should be regarded eligible.

The parks developed over time, and continue to change even today. Any improvements dating up to 1939 that are in character with the overall scheme are considered contributing. Where the integrity of a property is lost due to intrusions, excessive deterioration or loss of physical integrity, it is not considered eligible. Parks should retain a strong integrity of association, feeling, location and design.

Eligible properties must be associated with the overall park and parkway system designed, developed and managed by the Memphis Park Commission during the period 1900--1939. They can be associated with Kessler, or have evolved from plans and an approach to park design developed by Kessler and the Park Commission. The evaluation of significance should be based on an understanding of the entire system, which was intended to meet different needs depending on the function of the park. Thus, Overton Park is the best remaining example of an intact multipurpose park; Confederate Park represents a formal park intended to beautify and enhance the urban setting; and Gaston Park represents a neighborhood park. Forrest Park represents and incorporates all of these functional types.

Additions to the parks in later years can be contributing if they continued or expanded the overall function of the park without detracting from the original plan and features such as open space, roads and walks, and scenic or natural site features. The relationship of significant features should remain intact. Gaston Park and Overton Park are examples of where this has been successfully managed. Bickford Park exemplifies a case where a park has lost integrity due to inappropriate additions which destroyed the original design and feeling of the park.

Parks which are or may be eligible under these requirements are: Gaston, Forrest, Overton (NR79), and Riverside Parks; Court Square and Confederate Parks (NR4/15/82 - both included in Court Square Historic District); Belvedere Triangle; Jeff Davis, Douglass, DeSoto, and Galloway Parks; and Chickasaw Parkway.

The multiple properties nomination was developed based on a completed draft nomination for the Memphis Parkway System researched and written by Martha Carver staff with the Tennessee Department of Transportation. The draft nomination of the parkway system was as a historic district which met criteria A for significance in community planning.

1. Based on this original nomination it appeared that the parkway system was possibly part of a larger parks and parkway system which included early city parks as well as the linear parkway. At the request of the Memphis Landmarks Commission, the State Review Board allowed time for additional research to determine if a broader context might be developed which could incorporate the parks and parkways and other related properties into a multiple properties format, and thereby more easily allow significant historic parks or other related property types to be nominated.

2. The initial methodology used was to undertake additional research into the properties developed by the Park Commission in the early part of the twentieth century. The Park Commission minutes, annual reports from 1907-1914 and other material were researched. From this it was determined that although there were perhaps two property types (parks and parkways) developed by the Commission, they were conceived, designed, constructed and administered as a unified system. The continued existence of many of these parks today was easily verified by site visit. One park, Overton Park, was listed on the National Register in 1979. Some of the other parks retained their integrity based on early plans, and it was determined at that point that appropriate contexts could be developed.

3. The historic contexts were based primarily on the themes developed in the original draft nomination for the Memphis Parkway System. Several themes, including the parks and boulevard movement, the City Beautiful Movement, community planning, and

transportation were discussed. Of these, the City Beautiful Movement and Community Planning (1899-1939) appeared to be the most all encompassing and relevant, based on the time period in which the system's components were constructed and used. Within this framework, themes as diverse as the parks and boulevard movement, the development of planning as a public function, and the activities of the Park Commission could be discussed.

4. The second major historic context appeared from the first, in that George E. Kessler, although not widely known outside the field of planning, is unquestionably one of the major early planners. That such a large body of his work exists in Memphis intact made some additional research justifiable. Based on the similarities of the Memphis plan to that of Kansas City, it appeared evident that his work had distinct hallmarks. Furthermore, the continual mention of Kessler in the Park Commission minutes gives evidence of his close involvement with the Commission and his responsibility in the development of the Memphis System.

5. The property types selected were based on functional, stylistic, and associative characteristics. Parkways, boulevards and scenic roadways describe all the functional and design variations for the roads that Kessler designed. Parks is the other property type that had clear associations with the overall system. Other kinds of recreational facilities built by the Park Commission post date the period of significance, or have little or no relationship to the broader contexts and themes established in the nomination.

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