Kansas City’s Northeast, at its heart, is one of the city’s most diverse and historically rich communities. “Old timers” simply call the area “Northeast.” Past and present-day residents alike recall unique memories that create robust and lively accounts of “My Northeast.”

Depending on who you ask, Northeast boundaries vary greatly. For the purpose of this exhibition, Northeast is bounded on the north by Cliff Drive and the East Bottoms, to the south by the 9th Street Corridor, to the east by the Blue River Valley, and to the west by Paxton Boulevard.

After completion of the Hannibal Bridge in 1869—the first permanent bridge to cross the Missouri River—industry, railway, and the population of Kansas City boomed. Many moved to the high bluffs overlooking the Missouri River to the east. What was once a narrow pathway along the bluffs soon became known as Independence Road, Northeast’s first and most historically significant street.

Here is a description of Independence Avenue from the 1892 book Pen and Sunlight Sketches of Kansas City and Environs:

“A street of great beauty and popularity. On either side are residences of magnificence. The visitor is impressed by the spacious grounds surrounding the houses as well as the magnificent architecture. Many of the leading citizens of the city reside on the street and it is the greatest in the West. It is quite a thoroughfare, being the direct road leading to the city of Independence.”

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MY KANSAS CITY:
THE HERITAGE & LEGACY OF THE HISTORIC NORTHEAST
The Kansas City Museum would like to acknowledge the commitment, enthusiasm, and support of the City of Kansas City, Missouri including Mayor Sly James, the City Council, and the citizens of Kansas City who generously provide public funding for the Museum. The Museum is grateful to the City of Kansas City, Missouri Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners and the Director and staff of Parks and Recreation.

The Museum also wishes to offer thanks to its members and donors as well as the residents of the Historic Northeast community.

My Kansas City: the Heritage & Legacy of the Historic Northeast was developed collaboratively by curator Michael Bushnell, videographer David Remley, and the Kansas City Museum’s Executive Director Anna Marie Ingersoll and Director of Collections and Curatorial Services Denise Morrison.

This exhibition was inspired by former Northeast resident John Herbst who provided generous support for My Northeast: A Snapshot of Kansas City’s Historic Antioch Community, a traveling exhibit for the Kansas City Museum.

The historical artifacts and materials on display are from the collection of the Kansas City Museum/Union Station Kansas City and on loan from Michael Bushnell, Jan Belfine, City of Kansas City, Missouri Water Services, and the City of Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation archives.

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The Kansas City Museum is owned by the City of Kansas City, Missouri and operated and managed by the City of Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation Department.

MY KANSAS
CITY:

THE
HERITAGE &
LEGACY
OF
THE
HISTORIC
NORTHEAST
As early as 1850, according to city directories, a grocery store owned by the Jacob family was located near what is now Independence and Highland Avenues. By 1890, Independence Avenue (The Avenue) became the street of millionaires and the city’s power elite. Great mansions were built between what is now Maple and Norton Boulevards.

The avenue was home to many captains of Kansas City industry, including Judge Churchill L. White, founder of Commerce Bank, whose Romanesque mansion sat at 2114 Independence Avenue; David Reeds, founder of Union National Bank, built a prominent home at 2306 Independence Avenue. Before lumber baron Robert A. Long built his mansion on Gladstone Boulevard, he lived in a sizable Victorian home near present-day Independence Boulevard and Delaware Avenue.

One of the most influential residents of The Avenue was August R. Meyer, founder of the Kansas City Parks and Boulevard System. In 1895, upon Meyer’s insistence, the city named the section of Independence Avenue from Brooklyn to Brunton as Independence Boulevard, the city’s first boulevard. Meyer called on noted landscape architect George Kezler to design a series of parks and boulevards for the city, which became renowned for its natural beauty.

By 1900, Gladstone and Benson Boulevards were developed to the east; North Terrace Park (now Keeler Park) stretched well past the city’s eastern limit. Pasteur Boulevard stretched south to Panda Park, and West Terrace Park was developed from a public covenent of dunes and up to a picturesque lakeshore with terraces and twin stone towers overlooking the Central Industrial District.

A stroll down Independence Boulevard today still affords a view of the remains of palatial mansions that once lined the avenue. Only four of the grand homes still stand today. Two have been converted into commercial use: the J.K. Rumson residence (2117 Independence Boulevard) is now Pangman Bros. Funeral Home and the Bella Realty Group operates from the George D. Long residence (2253 Independence Boulevard). The other two historic houses (2021 and 2033 Independence Boulevard) are still privately-owned residences.

NATHAN SCARRITT: FOUNDER OF NORTHEAST

Two of the most influential residents of Northeast were Methodist minister Nathan Scarritt and lumber baron Robert Alexander Long (R.A. Long). Both were instrumental in the evolution of Kansas City’s Northeast community. Arguably, Nathan Scarritt can be considered the founder of Northeast.

Scarritt was born in 1821 in Edwardsville, Illinois. In 1848, after being ordained a Methodist-Episcopal minister in Fayette, Missouri, he was assigned to go west and assist Thomas Johnson at the Shawnee Indian Mission, just southwest of Missouri. Scarritt noted in his biography that his experiences were “often severe and sometimes hazardous.” He wrote, “I would have to swim swollen streams, lie all night on the ground even in stormy weather with nothing but a saddle blanket for a bed.” In addition to missionizing, Scarritt found an interest in real estate. He partnered with the Governor of Delaware and purchased 20 acres of land in what is now the heart of downtown Kansas City. His original intent was to build a school on the land, but it became more valuable for business purposes as the city’s commerce grew.

Scarritt’s first home in Northeast was near present-day Walnut and Norland Avenues, directly west of the Kansas City Museum. It was a log cabin of his own building. After the cabin burned, he moved roughly a half mile east and built a 12-room Victorian home with a stunning view of the Missouri River Valley, which also burned to the ground in 1879. The site of the original log cabin is known as “Scarritt Point.” An historical marker was placed there in 1980. In 1887, through profits from land business, he donated $30,000 to build the first Melrose Methodist Church at what is now Windsor Avenue and Rules. A cold and rainy Sunday in May, with roughly 18 parishioners huddled under a canvas tent, ground was broken for the new sanctuary. Scarritt served as Melrose’s first pastor after supervising its construction.

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Following Scarritt’s death in 1890, his estate was divided equally among his children. At one point, there were 11 Scarritt homes in Northeast; most still stand today. There was much controversy as to how a man of the cloth acquired a three-million-dollar estate.

“I would have to swim swollen streams, lie all night on the ground even in stormy weather with nothing but a saddle blanket for a bed.”
—Nathan Scarritt

Scarritt continued his philanthropy, and in 1909 donated the land and the construction cost for the Scarritt Bible Training Institute located roughly at Norland and Askew Avenues (just to the east of the Kansas City Museum). At the time, the school was considered outside of the city limits and lacked even the most basic utilities. In the 1928 book, Memories of Scarritt, author Maria Layng Gibson describes that the training school was “outside the city limits for one or two years. There were few houses in the neighborhood and no paved streets. The grain-filled pavements around the school was the only one in sight and the street car, drawn by mules was three blocks distant. The road had a ravine through its center into which one of the first students was precipitated when coming to the school in a car. With no pavement, no sewer, no gas, no electricity, and the mail box two blocks away, the imposing building loomed large until it surrounded until the city came out to meet it a few years later.”

The first graduating class of 1894 numbered all of five students. During its tenure in Northeast, over 2,000 graduated from the training institute. In 1924, the school was closed and its curriculum was moved to Nashville, Tennessee when it became part of Vanderbilt University. The stately building remained vacant for seven years until it was purchased by a developer in 1931. A new street was platted and several bungalows were constructed on the site.

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Churches in Northeast during the mid-20th century were often the center for neighborhood activities, offering religious, academic, and sports programs.

Congregations of varied denominations were located in Northeast. White Avenue Methodist, Grace Presbyterian, Children’s Memorial Lutheran, Bethany Baptist, and others offered community programs on Sundays and throughout the week. Larger churches, such as Independence Boulevard Christian Church (affectionately called ICC), housed a basketball league that was extremely popular with area youth. A number of church and intramural leagues played in the old “cadillac” gymnasium at the church.

ICC was a powerhouse in Northeast for a number of years. The congregation grew out of a Sunday School group established in 1866 by the Christian Church who rented space at Merley Hall, 2315 Independence Avenue. The congregation outgrew the hall and purchased a corner lot at 6th and Prospect for their own sanctuary that was completed in 1890. ICC member R. A. Long purchased land at Independence and Gladstone Boulevards and challenged fellow parishioners that he would pay for one-half of the construction cost for a new larger sanctuary if they raised the other half. The new building was dedicated on September 17, 1903. The final cost of $125,000 was paid in full.

In 1909, Long again challenged parishioners that if Sunday School attendance did not fall below 700 during July and August and below 1,000 during the months after, he would pay for an educational annex and gymnasium. Completed the next year, the annex included a prayer chapel, a room for the ladies aid society, classrooms, a library, and a pastor’s study. The gymnasium included a swimming pool and two rooms for reading and relaxing.

Eastminster Presbyterian Church was another significant congregation. The church at 237 Benton Boulevard was sanctuary for 134 charter members under the leadership of Reverend Treg Thomas. The church was designed by prominent Kansas City architect L. Grant Midlough. The cornerstone was laid in 1907, and the structure was built entirely of quarried native stone and trimmed in Carthage Limestone. Construction cost topped $90,000, which was considered very expensive for the time period.

Many area churches mimicked ICC, with their explosive growth. Melrose Methodist, Eastminster Presbyterian, and area Catholic parishes grew exponentially following WWI through to the late 1950s.

Melrose United Methodist Church was founded in 1887 by missionary Nathan Scutt. The congregation undertook a huge capital campaign and raised enough money to construct a larger sanctuary at 200 North Bates in 1926. One of the biggest events held in the new sanctuary was the funeral of former State Representative and City Councilman William Reid Royer. According to his son Will Royer, over 500 people filled the sanctuary to pay their respects. Melrose flourished until the late 1960s, when school desegregation began and families moved away in search of higher quality schools.

Catholic parishes in the Northeast were abundant and very active in their respective neighborhoods. Holy Cross, Church of the Assumption (now St. Anthony’s), St. Francis Seraph in the East Bendums, Holy Trinity (9th and Norman), St. Stanislaus, Holy Rosary, and St. Marys were thriving given the influx of Italian immigrants who settled on the north side of Kansas City during the early to mid-1900s. Some parishes offered as many as four masses on Sunday and another two on Saturday to accommodate the burgeoning growth of the community.
A brewer named Ferdinand Heim, Sr. emigrated from Austria to the United States in 1839, where he operated a small brewery in Manchester, Missouri from 1857-1862, and a larger one in East St. Louis from 1855-1889. Following in their father's footsteps, brothers Ferdinand, Jr., Michael, and Joseph together purchased the Star Ale Brewery in 1889, and two years later a sugar refining plant in Kansas City's East Bottoms to create the Heim Brewery.

The Heim brothers enjoyed great success in the brewing business, and at one point owned three breweries in Kansas City: Star Ale Brewery (14th and Main), The Imperial (Southwest Boulevard near Armourdale), and the Bagdad Heim Brewery (Agnes and Gumoite in the East Bottoms). As was the case with beer barons of the day, they also owned scores of taverns and saloons that only sold Heim beer.

One of the riskiest business ventures of the Heim brothers was the construction of a streetcar line to carry visitors to the brewery to buy fresh beer. Instead of abandoning this financially failing venture, they decided to build an amusement park, called Electric Park, located behind the brewery as boost streetcar ridership. The Heim streetcar line soon carried dozens of passengers to the amusement park. The brothers eventually sold the line for a substantial profit.

From 1899 to 1900, the first Electric Park proved to be an immediate success as one of the world’s first full-time amusement parks. The park was famous for its light display after dark, and featured one of the country’s first roller coasters, a Vanderbilt theater, and, of course, a giant German-style beer garden with fresh beer piped directly under the street from their brewery next door. At dusk, women in gauzy costumes would seem to rise from the water pool in the park, much like water nymphs.

As the city’s population moved south, the brothers followed and purchased land outside of the then city limits near 47th Street and Paseo Boulevard, to build a larger 27-acre Electric Park. Over 100,000 electric light bulbs lit the Brush Creek valley when the new park was christened on May 19, 1907. In 1917, former President Theodore Roosevelt spoke at the park to a crowd of over 80,000. Walt Disney cited Electric Park as his primary inspiration for the design of Disneyland.

A series of fires over the years, as well as changing tastes in entertainment to radio and movies, spelled doom for the park. During the 1920s, a fire destroyed a large part of the park. Despite the devastating blaze, the theater and aquarium remained open, and a Corn Carnival replaced the destroyed midway. A second fire in 1934 forced what remained of the park to shut down. Two weeks before closing, Electric Park celebrated its own Mardi Gras, and a fireworks exhibit punctuated the final closing ceremony.

Around 1893, the Heim family built grand homes on the bluff overlooking their brewing empire in the East Bottoms. The mansions were located on the fashionable Benton Boulevard just south of Concourse Park. Brothers Michael and Ferdinand Jr. built twin mansions at 126 and 126 Benton Boulevard respectively. The impressive brick mansions were separated by a huge carriage house and a heart-shaped circular drive with a stunning fountain in the center. Joseph built a stately home overlooking the park at 300 Benton Boulevard. Ferdinand Sr. built a home at 320 Benton Boulevard.

The Heim’s business interests were wide and varied. They owned part of a professional baseball team, held interests in both the Home and Bell telephone companies, and were widely invested in natural gas distributionships in the Midwest. A family of firsts, the brothers had the first private telephone exchange in the city, they owned the first 25-horsepower engine in town, as well as the first top loading ice box. Ferdinand Sr. was the first Kansas City resident to drive an automobile with a back seat. Ferdinand Jr. also has the distinction of being the first $1,000 donor to the Kansas City Museum, founded in 1940.

Heim Brewing Company went out of business after national Prohibition began in 1920. Without the steady income from the brewery the Heim’s wealth began to wane. When Joseph died in 1927, it was said he was down to his last million. Michael passed in 1934, leaving an estate that had dwindled to roughly $220,000. In February 1943, Ferdinand Jr. succumbed to pneumonia in St. Mary’s Hospital. While the proud name of Heim has not graced a bottle of beer in over 80 years, the grand accomplishments of the Heim brothers in Kansas City, while they happened long ago, have not, and should not, be forgotten.
Today, Historic Northeast is considered one of Kansas City's most diverse communities, with immigrants from over 40 nations.

As Kansas City's population grew through the early 20th century, immigrants of varied nationalities found work in the Northeast and ultimately made it their home. By 1900, the population swelled to a little over 165,000. Of that, roughly 15% were foreign-born. In 1908, a survey of approximately 7,000 packinghouse workers indicated that over 47% were foreign-born.

Why Kansas City?

Kansas City was centrally located at the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers, and had a meat packing industry that rivalled that of Chicago and New York. An immigrant packinghouse worker in 1910 made about $1.91 a day, roughly 30 cents a day under native-born workers. Nevertheless, immigrants came in droves, infusing their cultural customs and traditions into neighborhoods throughout the city.

Immigrant workers at a packinghouse in Kansas City, 1910.

Italian immigrants largely settled in Northeast, bounded by Woodland Avenue to the east, Locust to the west, the Missouri River to the north, and Independence Avenue to the south. Many worked in the packinghouses, and rail yards in the East and West Bottoms, or in the City Market. In 1900, a scare of the city's population was Italian. By 1920, the Italian population grew to almost 15%.

Local historian Dory DeAngelo tells of an early Italian immigrant named Francesco Basile who immigrated from Northern Italy in 1873 and moved to Kansas City in 1884. Basile established a bank and a shipping agency, and became a hiring agent for Union Pacific Railroad. He was also appointed to the Italian Central in Kansas City. Through his connections, he was able to help the newly-arrived Italian immigrants find jobs. They in turn put money in Basile’s bank, and frequented his Italian grocery, which sold imported Italian goods. Many Italian families in Kansas City today credit “Frank” Basile for bringing their ancestors to the United States. The East Bottoms was originally settled by Belgian farmers who grew a variety of produce to sell at the City Market. Immigrants from Slavic countries settled in the Blue Valley area just south of Truman Road and many worked in the Standard Oil Sugar Creek refinery that was built in 1920.

As the immigrant population grew, organizations like the Don Bosco Center formed to provide services and activities to create civic pride and unity. The Don Bosco story started in the late 1930s with the Italian community in Columbus Park. Every community has a heart, a place for people to gather, share, learn, and celebrate. The Italian-Americans of Northeast created their own with the help of Holy Rosary Parish. From the time the cornerstone was laid, the Don Bosco Center took one year to build. The organization officially opened its doors on September 15, 1940. Because they built the center with their own hands, it truly became the heartbeat of the neighborhood. It was and still is a place to play sports, learn a skill, dance until dawn, hear a speaker, have dinner, and connect with friends.

As the city grew and the Italian population began to spread out, Don Bosco remained a place for immigrants to gather, regardless of their country of origin. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Don Bosco contracted with the Federal Government to settle refugees in Northeast from war-worn African nations. Refugees began to arrive from Somaliland, Sudan, and Botswana. Many of these families still reside in the Northeast primarily in the Pendleton Heights area along Maple Boulevard and Lexington Avenue. In the mid-1990s, a new wave of immigrants began to arrive in the Northeast from the city’s Westside, which was literally being swarmed with an influx of new Latino immigrants. Catholic parishes in the Northeast that had, for over 100 years, been predominantly Italian or Polish, began to offer masses in Spanish. With more Latino families taking root in the community, the Mattei Rhodes Center established an additional location in the Italian Mound neighborhood on North Topping Avenue. The center provides after-school services, as well as a variety of advocacy programs for Hispanic families. The area’s longtime community newspaper, Northeast News, recently launched a “Northeast Mercado” section dedicated to Latino readers and shoppers.

A drive along St. John’s or Independence Avenue today appears as if you are traveling through many different countries. The Northeast Chamber of Commerce recently rebranded Independence Avenue as Kansas City’s International Marketplace.
Together Under One Roof

The Missouri Valley Historical Society collected historical artifacts, produced monographs on Kansas City history, sponsored lectures about city founders, and was active in the celebration of George Washington Sesquicentennial and the creation of Washington Park. Without a home, the group depended on the generosity of local businessmen to display and hold events.

The Kansas City Board of Education became the trustees of former Indian Agent Daniel Dyer’s collection of Indian artifacts, the basis for the Dyer Museum, often called the Kansas City Museum. Housed in the basement of the Public Library, the Dyer Museum was burning at the seams with newly-acquired historical artifacts and natural history and geological specimens.

Three women were credited with bringing these three groups together in the estate of R.A. Long, empty since his death in 1934. Olive Hoggins, Lorraine Shields Page, and Mae Reed Porter met with Long’s daughters Saffie and Leone to propose the makover of the estate into a history and science museum. In late 1939, the Long daughters gifted the mansion and property to the newly-formed Kansas City Museum Association.

John Ripley Forbes, a naturalist and conservator, heard about the new museum and headed to Kansas City without invitation to bid for the director’s position. With Forbes at the helm, the association opened the Kansas City Museum in May 1940.

The Women’s Division and the Museums were two ancillaries that played active roles in the growth of the museum. The Women’s Division, considered the matrons, created fundraising events that led to some major renovations to the Long mansion including turning the conservatory into the city’s first (and for many years only) planetarium. Their chief project, however, was collecting and displaying Kansas history; the museum’s costume and textile collection is one of the best in the Midwest thanks to their dedication. The Museums, a group of younger women, served as tour guides and would eventually take the museum’s educational kits into Kansas City schools.

The Kansas City Museum Association’s resources were strained following the start of WWII and the rationing that ensued. Soon after, they lost their beloved director Forbes, who came out as a conscientious objector to the war and was asked to resign. The association chose to close its doors for the duration of the war. Upon reopening, the association was faced with a financial crisis that eventually led them to offer the museum and its contents to the city. The museum was deeded to the city in 1949, and the Kansas City Museum Association stayed on to manage its operation.

The next two decades saw tremendous growth for the museum. The city’s first planetarium, popular exhibits like Eskimoland with its recreation of an igloo, and celebrity visitors such as Roy Rogers and astronaut “Wally” Schirra, made the museum an important part of the city’s cultural landscape.

A New Direction

By the 1970s, a new young professional staff realized that the building was too small to do all the great things it could be doing for local history and science and decided to find a new home for the science component.

Museum staff and civic leaders looked to the newly empty Union Station as a potential site for the new science museum. Despite vigorous campaigns in the 70s and 80s, voters would not approve a tax increase. In 2001, the dream was finally realized when the Kansas City Museum merged with Union Station Assistance Corporation and opened a dynamic new science education facility, Science City. After years of transition and struggle, the Kansas City Museum is now a path guided by the City of Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation Department, which took over management and operation in May 2014. As one of Northeast’s anchor institutions, the museum is undergoing extensive planning for historic restoration and rehabilitation of the entire property.

The Kansas City Museum will continue to collect, preserve, and interpret Kansas City’s local and regional history and heritage. The museum will be a lively and thriving public museum and a premier, nationally-recognized cultural and educational institution.

The museum will provide multiple points of entry into exploring and experiencing the city’s vibrant neighborhoods, unique traditions, rich cultural legacies, creative communities, leading innovations, and plentiful natural and physical resources. By doing so, museum visitors will make meaningful personal connections to Kansas City’s history and heritage in unexpected and wonderful ways, and be inspired toward thoughtful citizenship.
Another strong influence in Northeast was lumber baron Robert Alexander Long (R. A. Long). Long was born in Kentucky in 1850. He worked on his family’s farm and attended a one-room country schoolhouse. At the age of 22, he came to Kansas City and joined his uncle who was a banker.

Long’s initial business was the operation of a butcher shop along Broadway, near the old Coates House Hotel. The venture lasted less than a year. Next, he moved to Columbus, Kansas and invested heavily in wild grass hay. This investment would prove to be the foundation for his future. The hay was cut too late and turned brown; it was covered for the winter with lumber roofing material. When spring came, Long ended up selling the roofing material for more than the hay, and a business titan was born.

Long opened his initial lumberyard in Columbus in 1875. That same year, he married a local girl, Ella Wilson, and they built a modest home next to the lumberyard. By 1884, Long and his partners, Robert White and Victor Bell, grew the business with receipts grossing over $300,000. In 1891, the business was moved to Kansas City and grew exponentially over the coming years. Demand for lumber was high as migrants from Europe arrived to work in the factories and warehouses in the city’s Central Industrial District. The Long-Bell Lumber Company prospered, and soon Long was head of a vast lumber empire.
Long's first home was built at the corner of what is now Independence Avenue and Bellefontaine. Part of the stone retaining wall is still visible along Bellefontaine; a grocery store now occupies the site.

For his second Northeast home, Corinthian Hall (now the Kansas City Museum), Long wanted to build on a site just north of the Concourse in North Terrace Park (now called Kessler Park), near the intersection of Gladstone Boulevard and Walrond. The only problem was that three homes already occupied the site.

Not to be deterred, Long approached homeowner Herman Schmelzer (white cut stone home, center in this old postcard scene) and proposed to buy the property and pay to have his home moved. Roughly 40 feet had to be cut off the back of the house to make it fit on the smaller lot across the street. Long then approached Judge William Hockaday Wallace (owner of the Queen Anne on the left) He was not as obliging, but Long was persistent. Wallace finally relented but had Long pay for a complete remodel of his home once it was relocated. A third home on the site was moved to 321 N. Indiana.

Long's Corinthian Hall was completed in 1910, bearing the address of 3218 Gladstone Boulevard. It was Kansas City's first million-dollar home. The 72-room Beaux-Arts style mansion and related buildings were designed by the firm of Hoit, Price and Barnes, who later designed the Kansas City Power and Light Building (now City Hall).

As his daughter, Loula, became more active in her equine pursuits and acquired a number of horses, Long sought to develop the site across from Corinthian Hall (to the South) for a paddock for her horses. Widower Ellen Stevens lived in the home (on the right in the postcard) with her children. She did not want to sell the residence as her late husband had passed only six months after the house was built. Mrs. Stevens did not relent, and the stately home that still stands on the site today is a testament to her fortitude. Loula would have to train and exercise her horses behind the family's motor garage located at the 200 block of North Indiana.
Arguably, Long's greatest endeavor outside of his lumber business was the fundraising drive to create the Kansas City Liberty Memorial (now called the National WWI Museum and Memorial) to honor those who died in service during WWI. Long was elected founding president of the organization that spearheaded the capital campaign. After a nationwide search, architect and artist Harold Van Buren Magonigle of New York, was selected to design the monument.

Long stated upon his election:

"From its inception it was intended that this memorial should represent on the part of all people, a living expression for all time of the gratitude of a grateful people to those who offered and who gave their lives in defense of liberty and our country."

About two weeks after the capital drive started, a staggering $2.5 million was raised, largely through public donations. On November 1, 1921, during the American Legion Convention, the site for the memorial was dedicated in front of more than 200,000 people who turned out to support the effort. Five years later, on November 11, 1926, a dedication ceremony was held and Kansas City's Liberty Memorial opened to the public. In attendance were President Calvin Coolidge and Queen Marie of Romania, along with a crowd of over 150,000.
Families often gathered in Budd Park, sharing the huge shelter house with other families. The Parks and Recreation Department built massive stone fireplaces where families could light fires and cook meals in the park. Budd Park also featured a playground, wading pool, four tennis courts, roque courts, and plenty of shady spots for picnicking. The original shelter house was torn down and a native stone one was built in 1927, designed by noted architect Edward Buehler Delk, designer of the Country Club Plaza. Model sailboat races in the casting pool at Concourse Park were very popular. Contests, mostly fathers and sons, would build models and compete to win ribbons and get their picture in the local newspaper. Many enjoyed a leisure drive through the limestone bluffs of Cliff Drive in Resler Park. Established in 1897, the long, linear park stretches from roughly Passon Boulevard on the west to Chouteau Traficway on the east. Families often gathered in the meadow just off Gladstone Boulevard to take in the cool breezes that wafted up from the bottoms on warm summer days. The famous Cliff Drive Spring provided fresh cool drinking water to visitors.

Movie theaters were also a popular way to unwind and relax. Smart moviegoers knew to watch the glittering marquee for new movie titles, which changed as often as two or three times a week. Northeast’s main theaters included the Gladstone Theater near St. Johns and Elmwood, the Benton Theater at Independence and Benton, and the smaller St. John Theater near St. John and Asher.

During the early 20th century through the 1930s, circus masts would rumble through the rail yards and up the spur line to the area where the baseball diamonds are now at St. John and Bennington. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus and the Cole Bros. Circus performed often in the Northeast. Unloading the show was always a spectacle to watch according to Dory DeAngelis, whose family lived on Windsor Avenue for many years. Neighborhood kids often got jobs with the circus handing out promotional flyers in return for tickets to the show.

From August 12–17, 1930, the Northeast Improvement Association sponsored a huge Community Fair on the circus grounds and invited the entire city. A festival atmosphere consumed the entire area. Hundreds of dollars in prizes were given away, and attractions included food vendors, live music, carnival rides, speeches by local magistrates, and a keynote address on civic pride presented by Mayor A. I. Beach. A huge tent housed Northeast merchants, selling their goods and services. On the final day, Esther Hampton was crowned Miss Northeast, KMBC Radio broadcasted live from the fair each day.
Northeast neighborhood schools such as Scarritt, Garfield, and Thacher will forever be remembered by the many students and faculty who passed through their doors. Miss Genevieve M. Bank was the principal at Scarritt Elementary School, near Askew and Anderson Avenues. "A formidable woman," recalls former student and retired librarian John Herbst. She was in Shanghai, China when the Japanese bombed in 1937.

At the time, elementary schools in the district held classes for students through 7th grade. Field trips that focused on fine arts were a part of the curriculum at Scarritt. Teachers took students to see the city’s new symphony orchestra directed by the world-renowned Karajan.

Garfield Elementary School was completed in 1914 at 451 Walsh Avenue. The three-story, red brick schoolhouse with its iconic bell tower made a significant impact to the barren Northeast landscape. In 1999 and in 2002, changes were made to the building. The entrance was rebuilt and the bell tower was removed. A lunchroom was constructed in the basement, which was the fate of its kind in Kansas City public schools.

Garfield’s first principal was Charles W. Thompson, who served in that capacity for 31 years. C. B. Reynolds succeeded him and served for 15 years before becoming principal at Northeast High School.

In 1990, the old Garfield building was razed to make way for a new modern school. Over 400 former pupils from as far away as California gathered to have one last look at the historic building. The massive force inside the old school, dedicated to former Garfield students who lost their lives in WWII, was saved and now occupies a wall on the west side of the gymnasium in the new building.

Thacher Elementary School was built in 1897 near Independence and Brighton Avenues. It was named for Louis K. Thacher, a former major general in the Civil War and prominent Kansas City businessman, judge and school board member. In 1994, plans were set to raise the structure for additional athletic space for Northeast High School. The community and preservationists mounted a formidable defense, and the building was ultimately saved to operate as Thacher Multicultural Center until 2010. Once again, the building was put on the school district’s demolition list and again, a grassroots effort was made to save it. In 2015, the newly rehabbed and restored school was opened to the public.

Northeast High School was designed by architect Charles A. Smith, and at the time of completion in 1913, was considered a state-of-the-art school with a number of features unheard of in “modern” school buildings. In addition to an indoor pool, it featured a lunchroom and kitchen, an outdoor athletic field, an emergency room for teachers and students, and a teachers’ rest room. Student attendance in 1913 numbered 534. The school mascot was “The Viking.” The Vikings became a powerhouse in interscholastic athletic and academic competitive programs, dominating in football, basketball, and track and field, as well as debate and forensics.

Some of the first academic clubs included the Triple-C Club and Quiz Club.

Today, the Northeast High School Hall of Honor reads like a who’s who of prominent people in history. Cartoonist and Walt Disney partner Ub Iwerks, internationally-renowned cartoonist Mort Walker, former FBI Director William Sessions, Leonard "The Bell" Passamonti, restauranter Carl De Grave, and former KC MO Police Chief and FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley—all Northeast High School alumni matriculate. Northeast’s Alumni Association continues to support the schools student body with guidance and academic scholarships, allowing graduating seniors to advance to college and beyond.
In the early 1980s, Italian Mound, Lylets, Garfield (now known as Pendleton Heights), Sheffield, Scarlett Renaissance, and Independence Plaza Neighborhood Associations were formed to help residents with organizing neighborhood cleanups, maintenance, and crime prevention.

A new concept of home tours was launched in 1881 to showcase the area's historic architecture, as well as draw "urban pilgrims" back to Northeast. Today, the first tour was sponsored by the Northeast Owl and Don Bosco Centers, was an instant success, and by 1992, Scarlett Renaissance was participating with over 1,500 people claiming for tickets.

In 1983, longtime resident and activist Mary Therese Carroll founded Old Northeast, Inc., a nonprofit community development corporation serving the Northeast community. Old Northeast assisted neighborhood associations in navigating the labyrinth of city code regulations, shepherding grant dollars for infrastructure renovations (stairs, sidewalks, and street lighting), and spurring new home construction in blighted areas.

It was also instrumental in securing grants to fund ground-breaking crime prevention techniques with the advent of the Northeast Mobile Crime Watch and community policing concept. Today, crime along Northeast's primary corridors has dropped significantly thanks to the work of Old Northeast and the area's partnership with law enforcement.

In the 1980s, young professional families started moving to Northeast, drawn by the challenge and pride in resisting an older home, and to play a part in the revival of an historically significant community. The increase in home ownership and a new breed of engaged and dedicated residents jump started Northeast's renaissance.

Today, Northeast neighborhoods enjoy strong participation from residents and community organizations alike who participate in monthly meetings, weekend cleanups, community gardens, and the building of new playgrounds. The designation of historic districts in the Pendleton Heights and Scarlett Renaissance neighborhoods insures the integrity of the area's historic housing stock for future generations.

With the designation of CLF Drive as a state scenic byway in 2007, Northeast is once again becoming a destination for drivers and walkers. The natural beauty interwoven into the urban landscape, is an inspiring destination for arsets.

The Northeast maintains its rich ethnic and culturally diverse past by embracing the increasing number of African Americans, Cambodians, Vietnamese, Sudanese, Somali, and other nationalities moving to the area.

In 1999, the Northeast Chamber of Commerce was founded with a membership base of approximately 65 members.

This Mexican-themed Northeast home at 3025 Nibley was built in 1908 and designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Blanchard & Brown for the Charles Mussey-Sarah family. Scarlett's walls are designed in the Mexican style of the 1920s and 1930s, with the tile from the same factory that the Musseys bought for the house.

In 2012, NEAT (Northeast Alliance Together), a grassroots coalition of business and neighborhood leaders, was founded to support the development of a community that is clean, safe, inclusive, economically thriving, sustainable, and widely viewed as a desirable, sought-after destination.

Invest Northeast was launched in 2014 as a redevelopment initiative coordinated by NEAT to promote economic growth and beautification by offering property tax abatements, microloans, mirror home repair programs, dangerous building demolitions, wayfinding signage, etc.

In the East Bottoms, new businesses (The Local Pig, Urban Provisions, J. Ringer de Co., and Bottoms Up Collective) and well-established favorites (Knickknackheads Saloon) are reinvigorating the historic area.

Improvements have started at the intersection of Passo Boulevard and Independence Avenue to create a new gateway to the area.

All of this has resulted in a rebranding of Northeast as "Historic Northeast."

Indeed, Kansas City’s Historic Northeast still faces many challenges. However, that musical piece so many remember is making a comeback! We are rediscovering and embracing Northeast’s early driving forces of vision, vibrance, boldness, and resilience.
In the early 1900s, Northeast transitioned into a working-class neighborhood as affluent families left for newer suburbs and the industry boom began.

Between 1907 and 1910, there was a significant upward trend in Northeast’s affluent population to move south into the Hyde Park and Volker areas of Kansas City. As a result, Northeast began its transition to a solid working-class neighborhood. New home construction surged as the industrialization of the Blue River Valley and the East Bottoms created thousands of jobs and drew a populace of immigrants to the area.

The East Bottoms transformed from a German-immigrant farming community that sold the fertile land of the Missouri River Valley to an industrialized region where the Hein Brewery and Kelly Flour Mill called home. Rail yards began to be developed around the grain elevators and flour mills that rose from beneath the rugged bluffs of Cliff Drive. Hundreds of workers from Northeast would traverse the bluffs to their jobs in the valley below. Remnants of stairways through the bluffs to the East Bottoms can still be found along Cliff Drive today. Railroad companies employed scores of Northeast residents. Missouri Pacific, KATY, and Missouri, Kansas and Texas, and Kansas City Southern had operations in the East Bottoms.

In 1909, the Kansas City Fire and Water Commission proposed building an additional large water reservoir to meet the needs of the growing number of factories and manufacturing operations. Construction began in 1918. On completion, the new reservoir overlooked the burgeoning East Bottoms along with the existing reservoir in Observation Park near 20th Street and the Arkansas River, providing the city with an industrial water supply of more than 23 million gallons.

In 1913, Chicago-based Montgomery Ward & Co. acquired a 20-acre tract of land on the far eastern end of St. John Avenue. The company hired Kansas City architect John McKee to design a 1.2-million-square-foot facility that became one of the most iconic warehouse/retail stores in the Midwest.

In 1925, the Kansas City Belt & Nat Co. (today known as Sheffield Steel) was established by industrialist H.K. Sturtevant of Pennsylvania. The immense plant bordered Independence Avenue and employed over 600 workers in a space that covered 900-plus acres.

Sears, Roebuck & Company also recognized that a major distribution center located in the middle of the country was a wise business decision. In 1925, the company built a ten-story, 1.7-million-square-foot facility that occupied roughly 13 acres at 15th and Cleveland. The project, managed by B-W Construction Company, was considered the largest single construction project at the time. In the late ’70s, the company expanded its operation and added another one million square feet of floor space to the facility. Sears, Roebuck & Company employed as many as 1,000 workers in Kansas City at one time, and many generations of Northeast residents during its tenure in Kansas City.