

Paseo Overpass

JACK45

GENERAL DATA

structure no.:	S128B11	city/town:	Kansas City
county:	Jackson	feature inters.:	77th Street
		cadastral grid:	S16, T48N, R33W
		highway route:	Paseo Boulevard
		highway distr.:	4
		current owner:	City of Kansas City

STRUCTURAL DATA

superstructure:	concrete filled spandrel arch		
substructure:	concrete abutments and wingwalls		
span number:	1	condition:	good
span length:	63.0'	alterations:	none
total length:	65.0'	floor/decking :	concrete over earth fill
roadway width:	28.0'	other features:	ornamental concrete guardrails with paneled concrete bulkheads; horizontal grooves cast in concrete on wingwalls; incised panels cast in concrete on arch spandrels; corbeled concrete stringcourse at springline and road level

HISTORICAL DATA

erection date: 1917
erection cost: \$70,000.00 for both overpasses
designer: Harrington, Howard and Ash, Kansas City MO
fabricator : none
contractor: H.H. Hannenkratt and D. Murno, Kansas City MO

references: Missouri Highway and Transportation Department Structure Inventory and Appraisal: Structure Number S128B11; Roy Ellis, **A Civic History of Kansas City, Missouri**, published in Springfield, Missouri, 1930, p. 91, 93; promotional literature for Harrington, Howard and Ash, Consulting Engineers, Kansas City, Missouri, from the Kansas City Public Library; Kansas City Public Service Company, **History of Bridges and Viaducts**; Carrie Westlake Whitney, **Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People 1808-1908** (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1908), pages 592, 595; Kansas City Parks Department, **Cowtown 1890 Becomes City Beautiful 1962: The Story of Kansas City's Parks**, page 10; Fraserdesign, "The Paseo Overpasses: Preliminary Determination of NRHP Eligibility for the Missouri Historic Bridge Inventory," 27 March 1991; Jerry Cook, Kansas City Public Works Engineer, Bridge Inventory Report, as cited in Preliminary Determination of Paseo Overpasses; George E. Kessler, "The Kansas City Park System and Its Effect on the City Plan," **Good Roads**, 2 June 1917, pages 321-24; William H. Wilson, **The City Beautiful Movement** (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pages 122-25; field inspection Mark Hufstetler, 5 February 1991.

Paseo Overpass

sign. rating: 56

evaluation: NRHP determined eligible (outstanding example of urban concrete bridge construction built as an integral part of Kansas City's boulevard system)

inventoried by: Clayton B. Fraser 22 February 1994

HAER INVENTORY

Missouri Historic Bridge Inventory

NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE

Paseo Overpass
MHTD: S128B12

JACK46

DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION

1917

LOCATION

Paseo Boulevard over 77th Street; S16, T48N, R33W
Kansas City; Jackson County, Missouri

USE (ORIGINAL / CURRENT)

city street overpass / city street overpass

RATING NRHP determined eligible (score: 56)

CONDITION

good

OWNER

City of Kansas City

span number: 1
span length: 63.0'
total length: 65.0'
roadway wdt.: 28.0'

superstructure: concrete filled spandrel arch
substructure: concrete abutments and wingwalls
floor/decking: concrete over earth fill
other features: ornamental concrete guardrails with paneled concrete bulkheads; horizontal grooves cast in concrete on wingwalls; incised panels cast in concrete on arch spandrels; corbeled concrete stringcourse at springline and road level

An integral aspect of Kansas City's social and cultural development was the incorporation of a system of public parks and boulevards. first promoted in the late 19th century by prominent Kansas City personages such as August R. Meyer and designed by landscape architect George E. Kessler, the system featured a series of beautifully landscaped city parks linked with an "all-inclusive network of boulevards," which themselves were landscaped with plantings, sculptures, fountains and a variety of other decorative elements. Paseo Boulevard, or "the Paseo" as it is often called, formed a central spine that joined North Terrace Park on the north edge of Kansas City with Swope Park at the southern city limits. Extending from Admiral Boulevard to 79th Street for 9.07 miles, it was constructed between 1899 and 1919 and was actually a combined boulevard and parkway that ran north to south through the center of the city. The Paseo formed the focal point for Kessler's landscaping plan. As described by historian William Wilson:

The intersecting streets formed rectangles, each one of which Kessler fashioned into a distinctive park. At Ninth Street a small stone fountain bubbled; the Pergola, a double colonnade with a trellis roof, stood between Tenth and Eleventh; at Twelfth Kessler designed a high stone terrace to ornament and compensate for a steep grade; across Twelfth, a Spanish cannon captured during the Spanish-American War overlooked a formal sunken garden; at Fifteenth stood the wonder of the Paseo, an enormous stone fountain that Kessler designed after a fountain at Versailles. A small fountain at Eighteenth completed the original Paseo. Though each park was individual, all were harmonious and subordinated to the whole. In a day of slow travel, the Paseo presented a delightful pattern of colorful, shifting scenes to the pedestrian or carriage passenger.

As it extended through residential areas further south, the Paseo relied on the median between its north- and southbound lanes to form a long, essentially continuous park. Kessler used the overpass structures at intersecting streets to provide architectural punctuation for

the boulevard. The twin overpasses that carried the Paseo over 77th Street were integral features in Kessler's grand scheme. Engineered by the pre-eminent Kansas City firm of Harrington, Howard and Ash, the Paseo Overpasses employ forceful lines and ornamental concrete work to create a handsome landscaping feature for the boulevard. They replaced a timber bent trestle that had been built by the Metropolitan Street Railway Company in 1907. In October 1915 the Board of Park Commissioners let a contract to grade the Paseo to H.H. Hannenkratt. The contract included construction of the overpasses to carry the Paseo over 77th Street, for which Hannenkratt subcontracted with D. Munro. The two Paseo Overpasses were completed in 1917 for an aggregate cost of about \$70,000 as the boulevard was in its final stages of construction. Since their completion, the Paseo Overpasses have carried traffic with no substantial alteration.

Kansas City's network of parks and boulevards represents one of the most stellar successes of the City Beautiful Movement in America. "These boulevards and their east-west links tied not just the parks but the entire city together," according to Wilson. Costing \$14.7 million dollars by 1915, the system by 1920 incorporated almost 2000 acres of parkland and 90 miles of scenic boulevards. As the main link through the heart of the city, the Paseo was an integral feature in this boulevard system. It not only provided a vital greenbelt to link the parks, but it afforded George Kessler an extended pallet over which he could develop his grandiose concept of landscape design. Although its elaborate fountains were derided by some, Kessler's Paseo was an aesthetic success—one of Missouri's most noteworthy examples of urban landscaping. As integral components of the Paseo, these two overpasses are significant for their contribution to its architectural success.

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