

## CHAPTER I

# THE EARLY YEARS

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Harland Bartholomew was born near Boston, Massachusetts in 1889 in the community of Stoneham. Shortly after he was born, his family moved to a farm in New Hampshire. The first in a long series of personal tragedies that were to plague him for his entire life was the death of his mother when Bartholomew was two years old. The family then moved to his grandfather's farm. The grandmother having recently died also, Bartholomew's sister, 16 years older, took over his upbringing. He went with his sister and his brother-in-law when they moved, first to Gloucester, Massachusetts and then to Brooklyn, New York where his brother-in-law ran a drug store. Bartholomew worked in the drug store both before and after school. Vivid memories of this period include deep gratitude to his sister and to his brother-in-law. Bartholomew admitted that it took mature experience and judgment for him to recognize his debt to them, a recognition not so easily provided to a high school youth. The family was poor. Graduation from high school was a remarkable achievement in that day.

University training could not be considered. One of Harland Bartholomew's high school teachers, recognizing an unusual

talent, urged him to visit Rutgers, even offering to pay for the trip. The offer was refused; yet the trip was made. The result was entrance into the Rutgers civil engineering program. The combination of high academic standards and lack of funds, requiring too much outside work, resulted in Bartholomew's leaving Rutgers after two years. He received no degree from Rutgers at that time; two honorary degrees from that institution came later, Civil Engineer in 1921 and Doctor of Science in 1952.

He obtained work at the New York District of the Corps of Engineers; surveys of the New York harbor gave valuable experience. His next job was with E. P. Goodrich, a civil engineer. Goodrich had been selected with George B. Ford to prepare a city plan for Newark, New Jersey. They were selected somewhat separately, it would appear, so that their association was what in modern consultant parlance might be called "a shotgun marriage." However, both were active in the infant American city planning movement of the early 20th century and both were leading advocates of what has been called the "city efficient" approach to city planning. The "marriage" stuck; Ford and Goodrich went on to form the Technical Advisory Corporation.

Harland Bartholomew was not the only young planner they hired who would make a significant contribution to urban planning. The Technical Advisory Corporation prepared the City Plan of 1923 for Cincinnati, the first plan of a large American city to be officially adopted (in 1925). Ford and Goodrich's representative in Cincinnati was Ladislas Segoe. Both Bartholomew and Segoe founded planning firms. The two firms were friendly (and sometimes not so friendly) competitors for years.

### THE NEWARK ASSIGNMENT

New Jersey had passed enabling legislation in 1911 in accordance with which a city plan commission had been appointed to carry out its assignment to prepare a "plan for the systematic and future development of the city." The plan commission had selected Goodrich and Ford to prepare the plan, and they in turn assigned one of Goodrich's staff, Harland Bartholomew, to represent them in Newark, to prepare the necessary surveys and maps, to meet with the plan commission and other officials, and to generally carry out the work under the direction of the principals. (1)

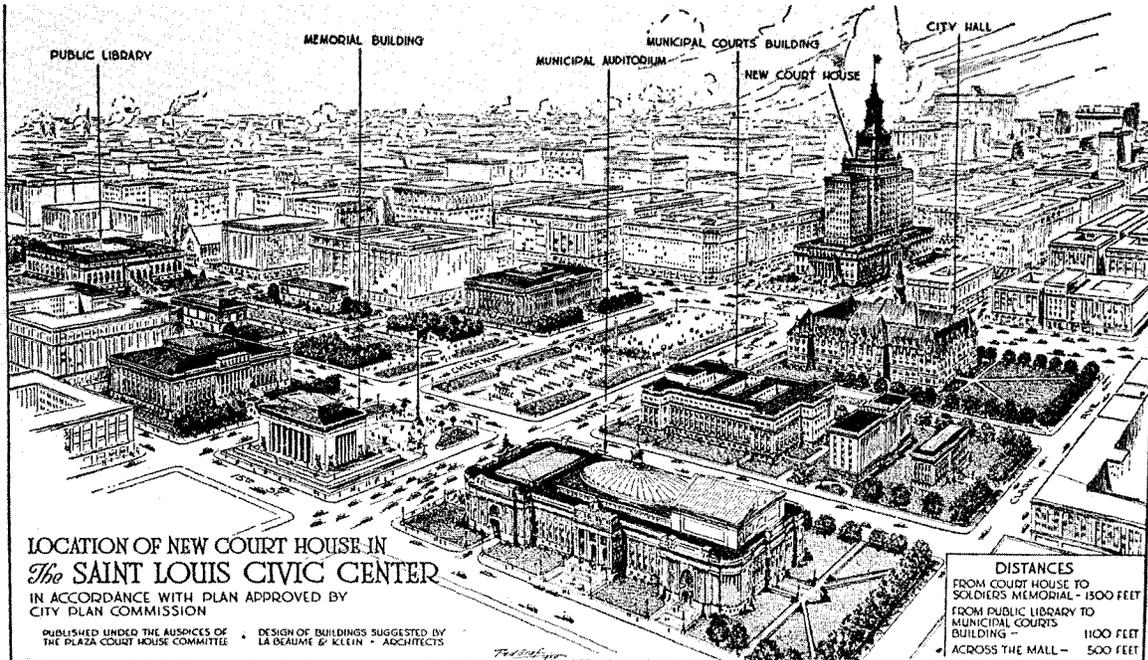
The assignment came as a distinct disappointment to Harland Bartholomew. He had been pleased with his assignments with Goodrich and experience gained in civil engineering design of major projects--bridges, harbors, terminals, and the like. He looked with distaste on the making of population distribution maps, counting traffic, and doing the various surveys and collections of data that his employers (rightfully so) deemed prerequisite to sound city planning. While Goodrich and Ford had spoken, written, and studied city planning, this was the first time either had

tried to make a city plan. Harland Bartholomew had not even considered the matter. They all started at the same place, as did the Newark officials involved and the Newark Plan Commission--all interested, intelligent, and able individuals, but none with experience in city planning.

Harland Bartholomew retained his interest in civil engineering design. One of the pleasures of later years of his career was that of seeing his firm undertake major civil engineering projects. Members of the Newark Plan Commission and particularly its secretary, Robert L. Ross, emphasized to him the newness of the city planning field, the great need for it in the United States and the obvious professional opportunity that it presented.

As the work of preparing the Newark Plan proceeded, Ford resigned because of pressure from other assignments and Goodrich had many long absences occasioned by work in Los Angeles. Harland Bartholomew was left to carry on pretty much alone. A preliminary report was presented at the end of 1913. Goodrich's contract was not renewed, although he was retained as an advisor, and in March 1914 the Newark Plan Commission engaged Harland Bartholomew as its engineer and its secretary. He became the first full-time municipal planning employee in the United States.

The work of the Newark Plan Commission continued. The preliminary report of Ford and Goodrich (and Bartholomew) was reviewed, modified and supplemented, becoming the published Newark City Plan of 1915 (2). Harland Bartholomew worked for the commission full time and occasionally undertook other assignments for New Jersey suburbs, for example. He was becoming known for his work. Other cities were interested in



# **BUILD THE COURT HOUSE NOW, ON THE PLAZA! VOTE YES SCRATCH NO PROPOSITION 10**

Used in the campaign to secure citizen approval of the Plaza Site for a key building in the St. Louis Civic Center

4 A perspective view of the proposed civic center was used as part of the program to pass the 1923 bond issue in Saint Louis and to build the center which looks much like the perspective today.

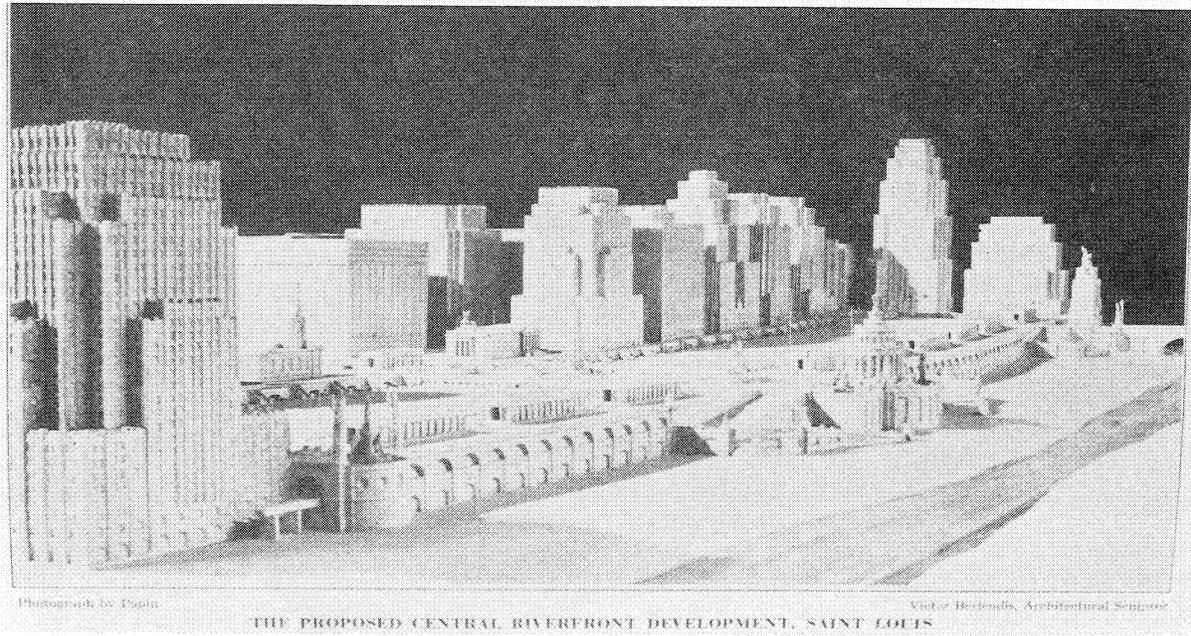
hiring him and he received many inquiries, including one from St. Louis.

## **THE ST. LOUIS ASSIGNMENT**

As he completed his work on the Newark plan, Bartholomew became a participant in the infant American city planning movement. As a consultant, he prepared a plan for Belleville, New Jersey, a Newark suburb (3). He wrote articles for the *American City* magazine (4). As an observer, he attended meetings held for the New York districting plan (the nation's first zoning ordinance), meeting in the process persons active or interested in urban

problems in New York, including Edward Bassett (5), who, by a strange coincidence, had been superintendent of the Sunday School that Bartholomew attended when he had lived in Brooklyn. He attended the National Conference on City Planning at Detroit in June 1915. Although young (26), he was becoming known in city planning circles.

In 1915 St. Louis had reorganized its planning commission. It was making a new start after a civic debacle had called for a new approach. Bartholomew was offered the position of engineer of this new commission and, after some hesitation regarding moving his family, accepted and started work in



5 Photograph of a model of the 1928 Central Riverfront Plan for Saint Louis, a proposal of the Saint Louis City Plan Commission, Harland Bartholomew, engineer. This was the first great call for an American city to turn around and front upon, rather than to turn its back to, its waterfront. This plan became the basis for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial and the Saint Louis "Arch," a municipal artifact comparable to the Eiffel Tower of Paris.

January of 1916. It was a position that he was to keep until 1954 (6).

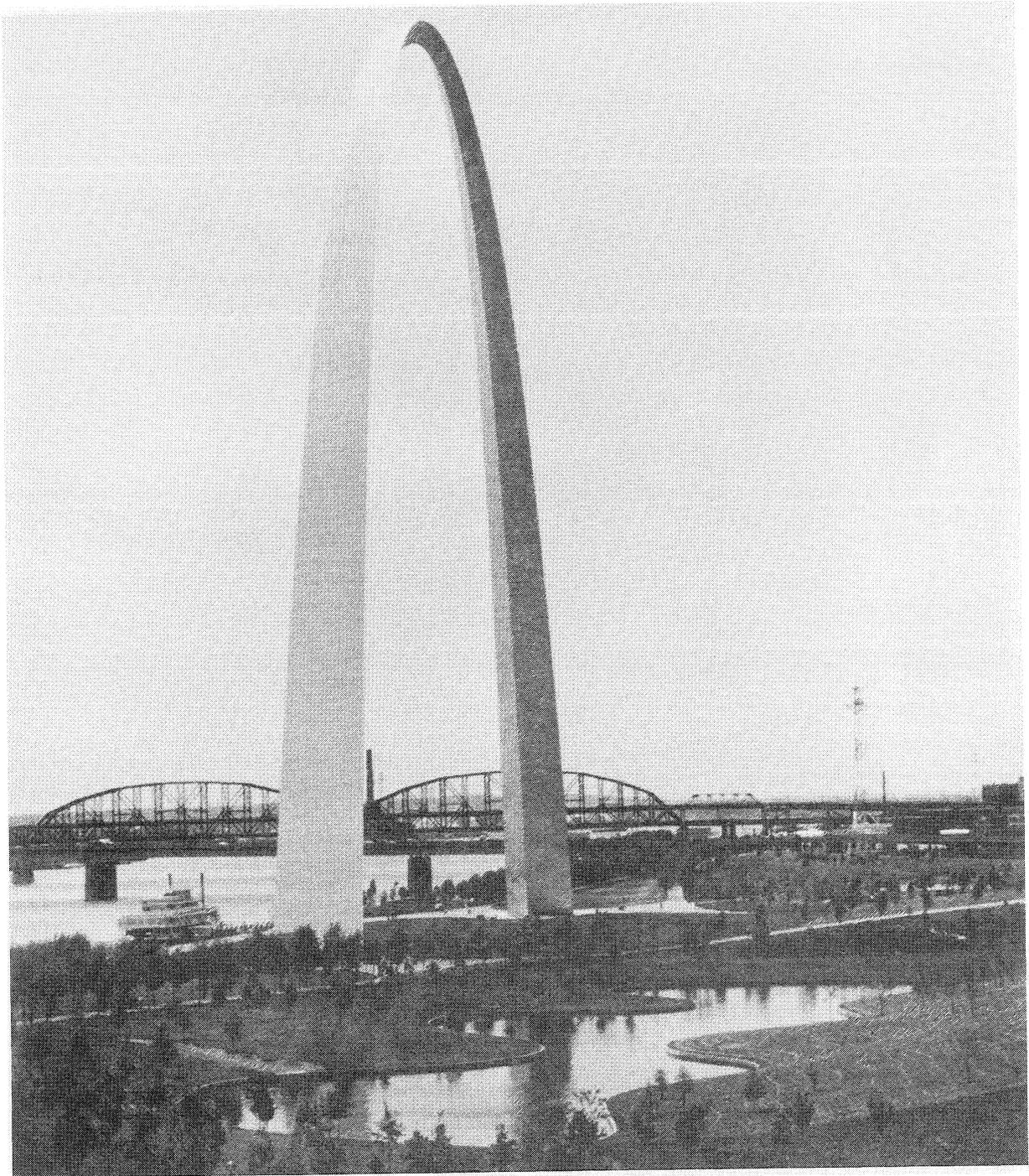
In St. Louis, Harland Bartholomew started immediately upon preparation of a comprehensive city plan. Circumstances forced a more fragmented approach than that used in Newark, with a first report on "Problems of Saint Louis" (7) prepared to encourage a positive response to planning. Reports and plans followed on "Saint Louis After the War," on major streets, on a capital expenditure program, on "districting"--that is on zoning the city--on a civic center, and the central, northern and southern riverfronts. It was not as neatly packaged perhaps as in Newark, but was possibly more responsive to the immediate needs and thus much more similar to a modern planning program.

The move to St. Louis increased Harland Bartholomew's involvement in the city

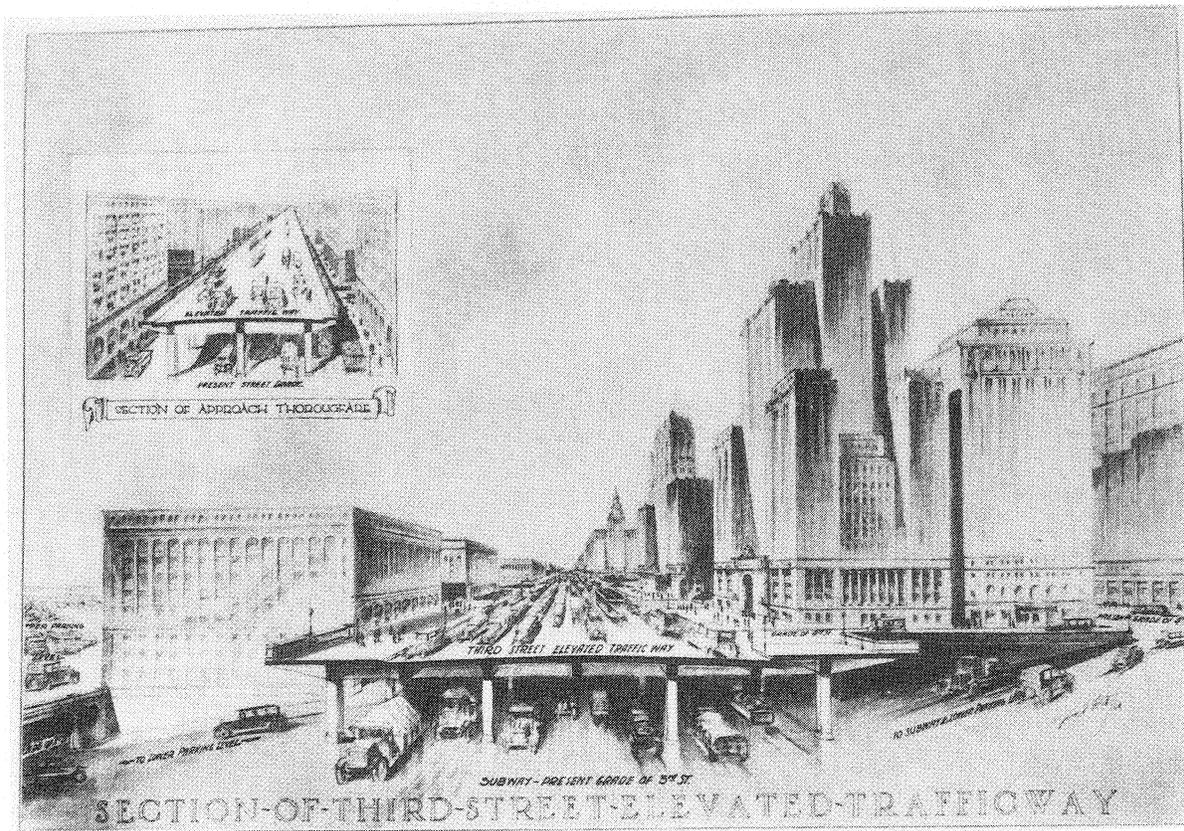
planning movement. There was general interest in what was being done in St. Louis. After World War I, there was a great period of optimism and expansion. The sky was the limit; every hamlet would become a city, every city, a metropolis - a perfect environment it would seem for an infant planning profession.

Many cities wanted help from Harland Bartholomew. Modifying his agreement with the City of St. Louis, he embarked on a limited consulting practice with such cities as Omaha, Detroit, and the District of Columbia as his clients. He was disappointed with results when he took stock of his accomplishments with this type of practice. The consultants' "in and out" approach seemed to bring nothing but frustrations and enemies.

The need for a better approach brought him to the founding of Harland



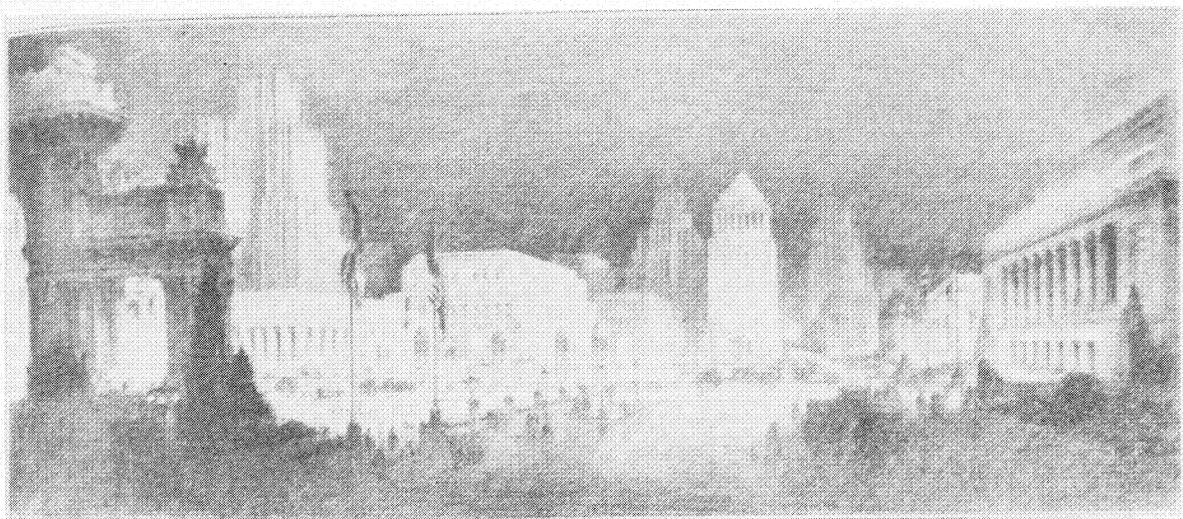
*6 The Saint Louis Riverfront in 1992. Eero Saarinen won the design competition for the memorial; the arch was completed in 1966 and the grounds 10 years later. Final design for the site was prepared for the National Park Service by Harland Bartholomew and Associates, following the Saarinen concept. The memorial has not been completed. The pedestrian bridges sweeping in great curves and connecting the Arch with the Old Court House were a major element in the Saarinen design and have not been built.*



7 By the middle 1920's it became apparent that a surface major street system would not meet traffic demands and that a new type arterial: the "expressway" or the "freeway" would be needed. Here is an early design for such a facility, a part of the 1928 Plan for the Central River Front of St. Louis. The drawing is by Fred Graf. The facility has been built in the location shown (Interstate 70) as a depressed freeway with service roadways above and is now the main entrance to the central business district from the north and south.

Bartholomew and Associates in 1919. He could not associate with other planners because there were none. He brought together representatives of other relevant professions: architecture, civil engineering and landscape architecture. They would not do "consulting." In fact, when I joined the firm 16 years later, the word "consultant" was not allowed in connection with the firm's practice. Instead, the firm would prepare comprehensive city plans for local governments, seldom for anyone else. The plans would be prepared by a process of working within the local government, a process similar to that Bartholomew himself

had gone through in Newark. The firm would prepare a plan over a two-to-four-year period and place a representative, a "field man," in the community just the way Ford and Goodrich had assigned Bartholomew to Newark and Segoe to Cincinnati (8). When the plan was finished (and adopted and published), the "field man" ideally might stay on as the city's director of planning or, as Bartholomew preferred, "planning engineer" if a mutually agreeable arrangement could be effected. During the preparation of the plan, everything would be done to secure maximum realization of the proposals. The zoning ordinance would



Designed by The Plaza Commission, Inc.

Drawings by Harlan Bartholomew

### The St. Louis Memorial Plaza

View east from a point on Fifteenth Street toward the Civil Court House on Twelfth Street.



8 Many consider the Civic Center Harland Bartholomew's greatest single accomplishment in the City of St. Louis. The center today bears a startling resemblance to this illustration from "Planning Progress in St. Louis" (1929).

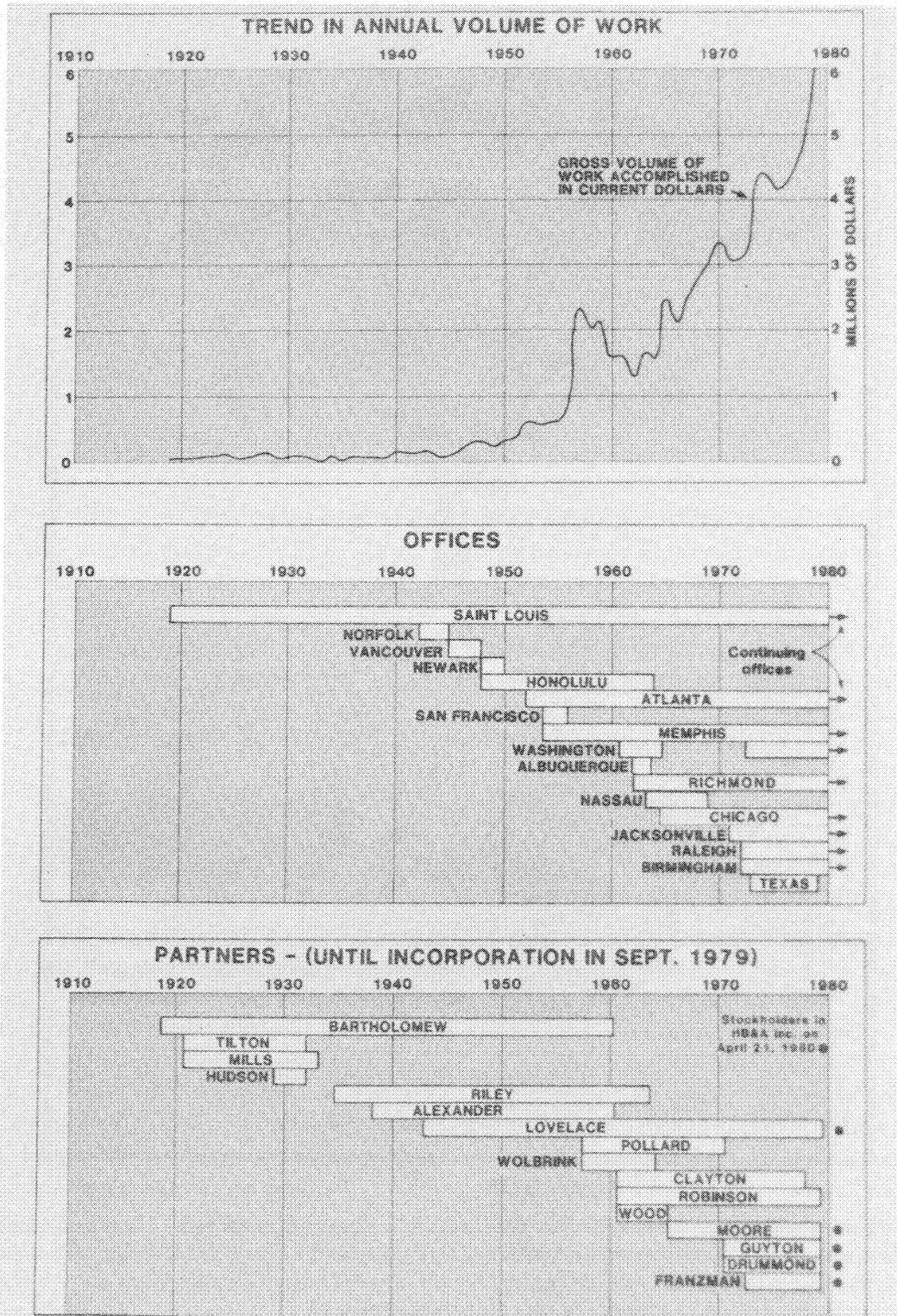
be enacted, a public works program gotten underway, a major park acquired, or a major street widened or extended. The people of the city were to see, use, and experience the benefits of the comprehensive city plan. The concept was sound; the firm grew and prospered. Between 1919 and 1932, fifty comprehensive plans were prepared.

### THE URBANA ASSIGNMENT

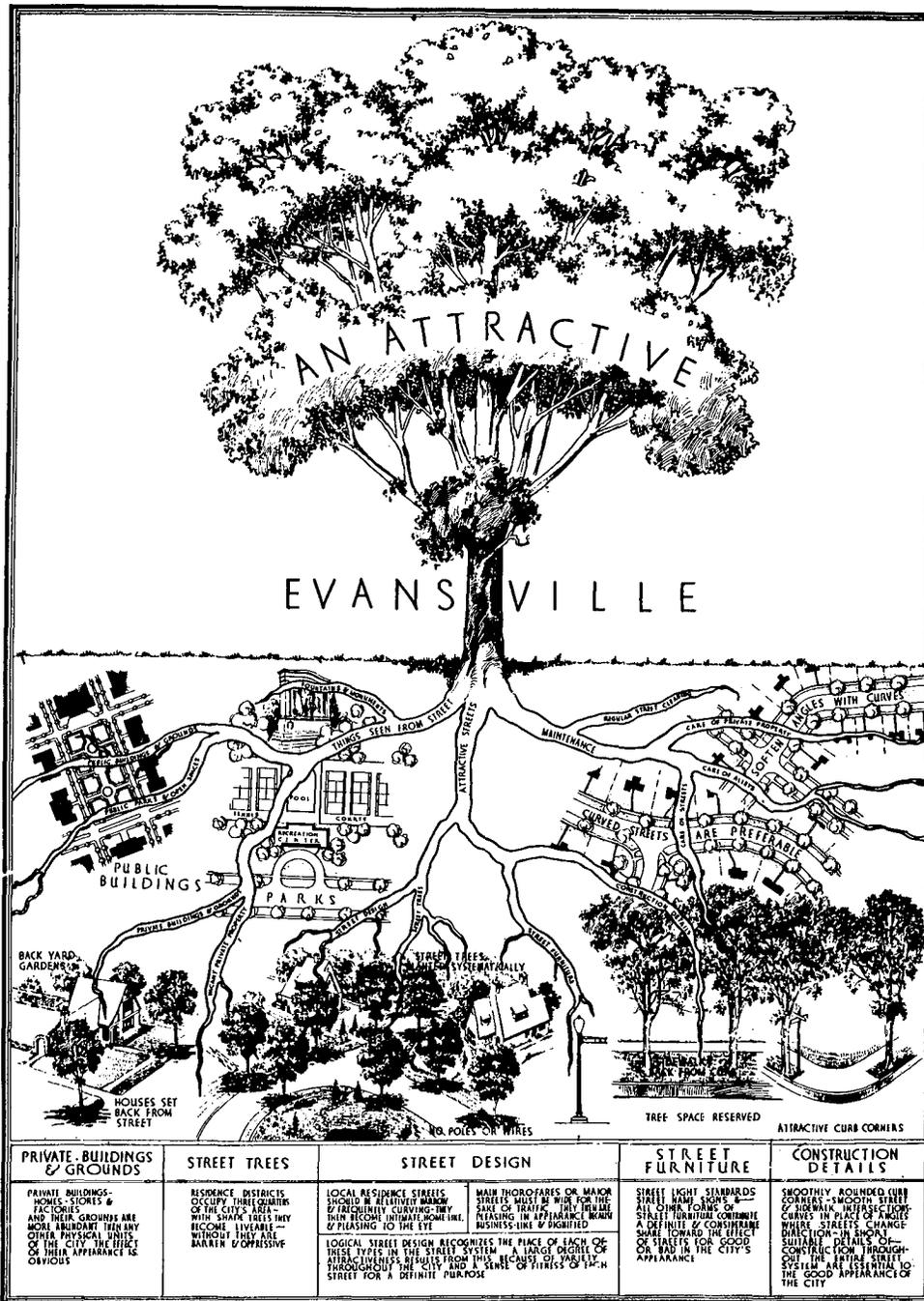
In 1918, a most unusual assignment had come to Harland Bartholomew. Charles Mulford Robinson, Professor of Civic Design at the University of Illinois, had died the year before. The Dean of the College of Agriculture, Joseph C. Blair (9), desiring that the students continue to be exposed to the "real world," offered the position to Bartholomew on a non-resident basis. Bartholomew was at first reluctant because of his lack of academic experience. He accepted because he could see the opportunities afforded through the intellectual discipline required to explain the planning practice to students, to associate with the academic community, and to meet, know, and hire students at one of the Midwest's premier schools of landscape architecture (and planning). The assignment was to continue until 1956.

### FOOTNOTES

- I-1 Johnston, Norman John, 1918-  
*Harland Bartholomew: His Comprehensive Plans and Science of Planning*, University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D., 1964, Fine Arts Unpublished University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan. Note: A summary of this book prepared by its author will be found in *The American Planner*, Biographies and Recollections, edited by Donald A. Krueckeberg, pages 279-300, Methuen, New York and London, 1983
- I-2 City Plan Commission, *Comprehensive Plan Of Newark* (1915)
- I-3 Harland Bartholomew, *Belleville, N.J.- A Plan* (Typewritten MS in Olin Library, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo.: June 1, 1916)
- I-4 See Appendix E for list of articles and speeches by Harland Bartholomew, texts of which are in the St. Louis office of Harland Bartholomew & Associates, Inc.
- I-5 See "From the Autobiography of Edward M. Bassett," Chapter 5 of *The American Planner* - I-1 above
- I-6 For an excellent description of the political and civic situation in St. Louis during the years prior to Harland Bartholomew's arrival in 1916 see: *Orderly city, Orderly Lives: The City Beautiful Movement in St. Louis*, by Edward C. Rafferty. Gateway Heritage, Quarterly Magazine of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri, Volume 11, No. 4, Spring 1991.
- I-7 City Plan Commission, *Problems of St. Louis*, St. Louis: 1917
- I-8 See "The Recollections of Ladislav Segoe," pages 301 to 322, *The American Planner* - I-1 above.
- I-9 In turn, Joseph C. Blair had been a pupil of Liberty Hyde Bailey, the famed botanist and horticulturist of Cornell University



9 As the firm of Harland Bartholomew and Associates became larger and more complex, we needed a ready reference to the firm's past: its partners, offices, etc. This chart was made to fill that need.



10 There are many, many things a community can and should do to improve its appearance. These are interrelated and are brought together in this diagram from the Evansville, Indiana Comprehensive Plan of 1922. Public support of planning could only come from public understanding and Harland Bartholomew and his staff spent significant amounts of time and energy on diagrams such as this as a means of telling the planning story.