

# THE SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2004

VOLUME 105 • NUMBER 4



Publication of this issue is made possible  
in part by the Frederick Horner Bunting  
Publication Fund

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## CONTENTS

|  |     |
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| <b>"Some Maps and a Lot of Trouble": Town Planner<br/>John Nolen in South Carolina</b><br>by Dean Sinclair   | 258 |
| <b>Southern Industrialization and Northern Industrial<br/>Networks: The New South Textile Industry in<br/>Columbia and Lyman, South Carolina</b><br>by Pamela C. Edwards | 282 |
| <b>Book Reviews</b>  | 306 |
| <b>Recently Processed Manuscripts</b>  | 329 |
| <b>Memorials</b>   | 334 |
| <b>Index, Volume 105</b>   | 335 |

## **"SOME MAPS AND A LOT OF TROUBLE": TOWN PLANNER JOHN NOLEN IN SOUTH CAROLINA**

DEAN SINCLAIR\*

IN THE 1920S, JOHN NOLEN, AMERICA'S PREMIER TOWN planner, traveled to South Carolina to spread the gospel of city planning as well as to seek business in the Palmetto State for his growing Cambridge, Massachusetts, planning firm. The emerging business elite in the state's cities, many of whom espoused progressive ideas and supported the emergence of a New South, expressed interest in modern city planning. Influenced by movements such as "City Beautiful," the organizations that most keenly reflected this interest were the local chambers of commerce, many of which were already involved in "good government" and city booster projects. In two cities—Charleston and Spartanburg—the progressive businessmen of the community were deeply involved in efforts to bring modern urban planning to South Carolina and thus propel their respective cities into a new era of growth and prosperity.

Nolen's efforts met with mixed success. In Charleston, he gave a lecture at the chamber of commerce to city leaders, representatives from the media, and members of the general public, but the Charleston business elite was unable to convince the political establishment to engage in a large-scale community planning effort. In Spartanburg, Nolen met with considerably more success, giving a lecture to city leaders who then engaged the planner to develop a comprehensive plan, the first for a city in South Carolina. Nolen's plan for Spartanburg, however, was extremely controversial and eventually fell victim to a backlash from local business and political leaders. Though Nolen's efforts in South Carolina left no permanent mark, his involvement with two of South Carolina's major cities is illustrative of attempts by the state's urban elite to apply the principles of progressive thought, economic development, and professional expertise in building what they dreamed would become a prosperous New South.

### PLANNING IN SOUTH CAROLINA

John Nolen was not the first professional planner to come to the Palmetto State. As part of the trend in the United States towards urban

\* Dean Sinclair is assistant professor of geography at Northwestern State University. This research was supported in part by a grant from the John Nolen Research Fund of Cornell University and the Council of University Research Initiative Awards of Northwestern State University.

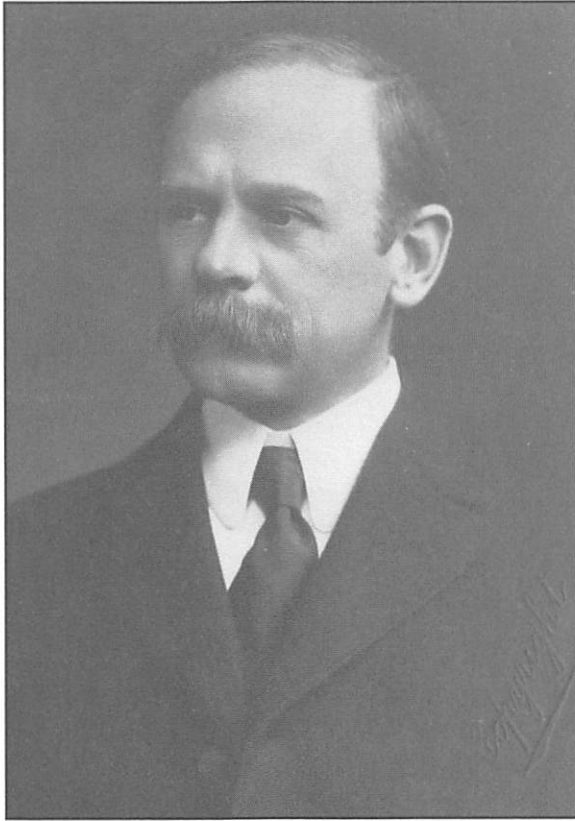
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**John Nolen (1869-1937). Courtesy of the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, N.Y.**

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improvement influenced by the “City Beautiful” movement, which held that aesthetics could positively influence character, several cities in South Carolina engaged professional, out-of-state planners for a variety of projects.<sup>1</sup> Among the first improvement plans completed in the state were those for Columbia and Greenville. The plan for Columbia was completed in 1905 by the Boston landscape architecture firm of Kelsey and Guild.<sup>2</sup> The plan called for improvements in the capital city’s street and park system as

<sup>1</sup> William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Kelsey and Guild, *The Improvement of Columbia, South Carolina. Report to the Civic League, Columbia, South Carolina, by Kelsey and Guild, Landscape Architects, Boston, Mass.* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Mt. Pleasant Press, 1905).

well as the redevelopment of the city's neglected Congaree River waterfront. Less successfully, the plan called for the creation of an alley system for downtown Columbia and a "civic center," neither of which met with any tangible results. At around the same time, Greenville's Municipal League completed an improvement plan that called for the redevelopment of the downtown area.<sup>3</sup>

The city of Charleston was also deeply involved in professional planning, using the renowned landscape architecture firm of Olmsted and Associates to complete a plan for Chicora Park, which would have been the largest suburban park in the state. The plan was completed in 1898, but the bulk of the park property was deeded to the federal government in 1900 for construction of the Charleston Naval Station.<sup>4</sup> In 1909 the city, under progressive Mayor R. Goodwyn Rhett, again used the Olmsted firm to complete a plan for the ambitious "Boulevard Project," an improvement project that involved filling marshland for the creation of 191 prime residential lots as part of an extension of the Battery.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the urban elite of South Carolina were part and parcel of the Progressive Era, a contentious period in American history but one generally characterized by well-meaning attempts to improve the human condition.<sup>6</sup> Many South Carolina politicians, such as Rhett of Charleston and Governor Richard I. Manning, were directly tied to popular movements for progressive reform and the efforts to build what came to be called the New South.<sup>7</sup> Nationally, the progressive movement was largely spent by 1920, but the

<sup>3</sup> Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 465.

<sup>4</sup> *Yearbook of the City of Charleston, 1897* (Charleston, S.C., 1898); *Yearbook of the City of Charleston, 1900* (Charleston, S.C., 1901).

<sup>5</sup> John Joseph Duffy, "Charleston Politics in the Progressive Era" (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 1963), 49-51.

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent study of South Carolina during this period, see Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina in the Modern Age* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992). The interpretation of the Progressive Era is an ongoing project, see, for example, Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Daniel T. Rogers, *Atlantic Crossing: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998); and Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 2003). The Progressive Era in the South is equally contentious, see, for example, Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); and William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> See Duffy, "Charleston Politics in the Progressive Era"; see also Richard M. Burts, *Richard Irvine Manning and the Progressive Movement in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974).

urge for urban improvement in South Carolina continued into the following decade, as shown by the involvement of John Nolen in the Palmetto State.

JOHN NOLEN

John Nolen was one of the most active landscape architects and town planners in North America in the early decades of the twentieth century. After a varied career in academia as well as travel to Europe, Nolen entered Harvard University's new Master of Arts program in landscape architecture in 1903 at the age of thirty-four and completed the program in 1905. Nolen opened an office on Harvard Square in Cambridge before his graduation, and almost immediately took a job as advisor to the Park and Tree Commission of Charlotte, initiating his work in the American South. At about the same time, Nolen received a commission to complete a plan for a park in Savannah, giving him additional expertise in the South.<sup>8</sup>

Nolen's stature in American city planning grew rapidly. In 1908 he completed a major comprehensive plan for San Diego and in 1912 began work on an ambitious plan to design Charlotte's new Myer's Park subdivision. In addition, in the latter half of the decade Nolen began planning the new city of Kingsport, Tennessee, a project that spanned several years. In the 1920s, Nolen was involved in numerous ambitious projects, including planning the new cities of Mariemont, Ohio, and Venice, Florida. Nolen's firm was active in all regions of the country as well as internationally, and Nolen, through his lectures, articles, and books, was a tireless proponent of the importance of planning new cities as well as replanning existing ones.<sup>9</sup>

Nolen's efforts in South Carolina involved pushing for comprehensive plans for existing cities rather than the creation of new towns. Comprehensive plans incorporate all aspects of a city's functions, including land-use regulation, transportation networks, sewer and water systems, economic activities, educational facilities, park systems, and even political structure. Nolen believed that it was important for existing towns, both large and small, to comprehensively plan. In 1911 Nolen wrote, "There are many misconceptions about city planning, but none is farther from the fact than the notion that comprehensive planning is only for big cities." Comprehensive planning, Nolen argued, "especially with our limited city charters and the

<sup>8</sup> See Frank Burgraff, "John Nolen," in Charles A. Birnbaum and Robin Karson, eds., *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 264-269; John Hancock, "John Nolen: The Background of a Pioneer Planner," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 26:4 (November 1960): 302-312.

<sup>9</sup> Hancock, "John Nolen," 302-312; John Nolen, *New Towns for Old* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1927).

hampering laws of our states, can have as yet but little play in larger places. . . . But with smaller towns and villages the case is different." Nolen concluded that: "Throughout the United States there are cities with relatively easy opportunities before them to improve their water fronts, to group their public buildings, to widen their streets, to provide in twentieth century fashion for transportation and to set aside areas now considered indispensable for public recreation, and yet most of these cities until recently stood listless, without the business sense, skill, and courage to begin the work that must sooner or later be done."<sup>10</sup>

#### JOHN NOLEN IN CHARLESTON

John Nolen visited Charleston in 1913 and drew up the rough outline for a comprehensive plan for the city.<sup>11</sup> It is unclear whether Nolen pitched this plan to leaders of the city at that time, but in a thirteen-page report written in 1915 entitled "Charleston, S.C.," Nolen described the situation of the Charleston waterfront, including ownership, terminal capacity, tides, and other characteristics. The report noted that "in several ways the situation of Charleston resembles that of New York City, the Cooper corresponding in location to the East River and the Ashley to the Hudson River."<sup>12</sup>

These early attempts to lay the groundwork for a plan for the city of Charleston did not bear fruit, and there is no indication that the city's leadership was interested in engaging the services of the planner. In 1918 Nolen was contacted by a Charleston developer concerning a plan for a proposed subdivision near the Charleston Navy Base, but Nolen declined the opportunity.<sup>13</sup> By 1920, however, there was a growing sense in Charleston that the city was stagnating and the hoped-for boom in economic development from the Navy Yard was not going to materialize. In addition, in his successful 1919 mayoral bid, William P. Grace emphasized his opposition to Charleston's business elite, marginalizing the progressive businessmen that had run the city for decades. Nevertheless, Charleston's

<sup>10</sup> John Nolen, "Replanning Small Cities," *American City* 6:12 (1911): 238-239.

<sup>11</sup> Nolen, "Charleston, S.C.," dated April 5, 1913, John Nolen Papers, Box 72, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. (The John Nolen Papers at Cornell University is hereinafter cited as JNP.)

<sup>12</sup> Nolen, "Charleston, S.C.," n.d., JNP, Box 72. References in the document strongly suggest that the report was completed in 1915.

<sup>13</sup> Cox to Nolen, July 31, 1918, JNP, Box 57; Nolen to Cox, September 11, 1918, JNP, Box 57.



business community realized that something had to be done about the city's slumping fortunes.<sup>14</sup>

In November 1920, Albert J. Stowe, secretary of the chamber of commerce, wrote Nolen that "practically all interests here in Charleston are about ripe for the institution of a city planning campaign." Stowe added that "to crystallize this sentiment, we are interested in having someone come here for a preliminary study of the situation, and are wondering if you might be able to undertake this." The plan was for Nolen to address a public forum in mid-December concerning the benefits of town planning. "To accomplish best results," Stowe injected, "it would be highly advisable that you make a casual study of the situation a day or so in advance of the large meeting, and also meet with various of our special committees, which are directing energies along this line."<sup>15</sup>

Nolen was not in Cambridge when the letter arrived in his office, but upon his return on December 6, he quickly replied, stating that "I already have one important engagement in western North Carolina, and the work for Spartanburg and Wilmington is under consideration. It seems likely, however, that the work in the South will not develop immediately—that is, before Christmas." Nolen, in eager anticipation of getting the opportunity to complete a plan for one of America's most historic cities, informed Stowe that "I have been in Charleston, and of course know something of its unique history and peculiar charm, both of which would contribute towards the interest and success of a city planning movement."<sup>16</sup>

The next several weeks involved correspondence to establish a date for Nolen's visit to Charleston. With December out of the question, Stowe tried to interest Nolen in a visit to coincide with the chamber's annual meeting scheduled for January 18, 1921. Stowe anticipated that the meeting would "have in the neighborhood of four hundred local people present, and it seems to me that this would be a very good opportunity to bring vividly before our membership and other local people the advantages to be derived through a city planning movement." Stowe, perhaps growing slightly unsure of his speaker, also wrote, "I am presuming that in addition to your technical ability and training in city planning, you are adaptable to addressing large meetings in a way which would truly inspire your audience."<sup>17</sup> Nolen replied on December 14 that the January 18 date would not work and added

<sup>14</sup> Walter J. Fraser, Jr., *Charleston! Charleston!* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989): 364-366.

<sup>15</sup> Stowe to Nolen, November 26, 1920, JNP, Box 72.

<sup>16</sup> Nolen to Stowe, December 6, 1920, JNP, Box 72.

<sup>17</sup> Stowe to Nolen, December 8, 1920, JNP, Box 72.

that "I must leave to your judgment the question of whether I can 'inspire' your audience. I should not like to lay claim to that ability."<sup>18</sup>

Nolen and Stowe eventually agreed on a date of January 25, 1921, for the planner's appearance in Charleston. Stowe set up meetings and a tour of the city "to look over the ground with people well qualified to explain the situation to you here."<sup>19</sup> Nolen arrived in Charleston on Monday, January 24, on a sleeper from Jacksonville, Florida. Stowe, who was not in Charleston at the time of Nolen's visit, arranged a busy schedule for the planner before he was to give his talk to the assembled chamber of commerce. As he wrote Nolen prior to his arrival: "The Committee will meet you at the train, and take you to the New Charleston Hotel . . . and the same group of four men is arranging to spend practically its entire time so far as is necessary with you during your visit. They will see that you meet the City Engineer Monday morning, and have an opportunity of going over various charts, maps, etc., of Charleston and vicinity with him."<sup>20</sup> Stowe also arranged for a small dinner party on Monday night at the chamber with several business and political leaders. "At the Monday night meeting," Stowe remarked, "it is not our thought that you make a detailed talk on city planning, but we do feel that very likely you will want to confer with such men."<sup>21</sup>

Nolen's visit to Charleston was trumpeted in the *Charleston News and Courier* under the headline "City Planner to Visit This City." The newspaper reported that "great interest is getting under way in connection with a practical city planning movement started some time ago in Charleston and those giving the matter attention are anticipating a treat in the address here Tuesday night by Mr. John Nolen of Cambridge Mass., on the subject." The article continued, "It is pointed out that Mr. Nolen . . . believes that city planning should be first along lines of efficiency and utility, rather than for esthetic beauty alone."<sup>22</sup> The newspaper actively promoted Nolen's visit, announcing before the meeting that the planner, "known as an authority on the planning of city's [*sic*] making them worth while for the future, probably knows by this time just a whole lot more than the average voter of Charleston—that is because it is his business to assimilate the good and the bad about a city—and he will present his verdict to the membership meeting of the Charleston Chamber of Commerce tonight."<sup>23</sup>

Nolen delivered his "verdict" to the assembled chamber as scheduled, and a significant portion of the talk was quoted in the local newspaper. The

<sup>18</sup> Nolen to Stowe, December 14, 1920, JNP, Box 72.

<sup>19</sup> Stowe to Nolen, December 30, 1920, JNP, Box 72.

<sup>20</sup> Stowe to Nolen, January 17, 1921, JNP, Box 72.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> [Charleston] *News and Courier*, January 23, 1921.

<sup>23</sup> *News and Courier*, January 25, 1921.

newspaper reported that “Mr. Nolen explained that city planning was simply a recognition of the sanitary, economic and aesthetic laws which should govern the original arrangement and subsequent rearrangement and development of a city.” Quoting Nolen, the article continued: “In a word, it is the substitution of art, scientific skill and foresight, for change, haphazard and piecemeal procedure. It is the application to the building of cities of the methods which have been found effective and which are used to some extent, at least, in building many of the component parts of cities.”<sup>24</sup> The *News and Courier* added that Nolen “carefully related the needs in the way of planning as he found them in this city and expressed the hope that the people would realize that if the city was to forge ahead as it should there was much to be done.”<sup>25</sup>

The implication was clear that John Nolen was the man for the job. Upon his return to Cambridge on February 4, Nolen sent his bill for the trip to Stowe, stating that “the Charleston visit, so far as I was concerned, was very pleasant, and I trust worth while from the point of view of the Chamber of Commerce.” Nolen, however, must have gotten a sense that not everyone in Charleston was interested in planning, for he wrote, “I realize that the outlook for planning in a comprehensive way is not as bright as it is in some other places—and yet I think much could be done.” Finally, Nolen added hopefully, “I do not believe that those who are interested primarily in the development of the harbor, with its docks and piers, are in any way opposed to the sort of planning which should accompany the further development of Charleston as a commercial port.”<sup>26</sup> As a way of keeping his name before Charleston’s elite, Nolen sent letters the same day to Mayor Grace and others thanking them for their hospitality and promoting the importance of city planning.<sup>27</sup>

In response to Nolen’s February 4 letter, Stowe wrote, “The conversations I have had since returning to Charleston . . . have indicated that you pleased the local people greatly.” Stowe added, though, that “I am sure that we both realize that the matter of developing local interest in a city plan, will be a somewhat tedious one, and consequently, it will be altogether pleasant during the work which we must have along this line in the future, for you to keep in touch with us on it.”<sup>28</sup>

In fact, Nolen kept in touch with Stowe, writing in October 1921 that “this is the time to make up our autumn and winter schedule, and I am

<sup>24</sup> *News and Courier*, January 26, 1921.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Nolen to Stowe, February 4, 1921, JNP, Box 72.

<sup>27</sup> Nolen to Grace, February 4, 1921, JNP, Box 72; Nolen to Way, February 4, 1921, JNP, Box 72.

<sup>28</sup> Stowe to Nolen, February 10, 1921, JNP, Box 72.

writing you especially because I have just made a contract to prepare a plan for Spartanburg, S.C.”<sup>29</sup> Nolen also wrote Mayor Grace that “I have not forgotten my visit to Charleston last February [January], and more particularly your courtesy to me and the interesting proposals which you made with regard to the water front developments.” Nolen added, “I am wondering what progress has been made in this matter since last February.”<sup>30</sup> Nolen never received an answer to either letter, which served as an indication that there had been little progress in generating interest in a comprehensive planning effort in Charleston. Growing local and statewide economic problems as well as Grace’s hostility towards the Charleston business establishment doomed these early planning efforts, and the dream of a comprehensive plan for the improvement of the city would not be realized until several decades later.<sup>31</sup>

#### JOHN NOLEN IN SPARTANBURG

Nolen was more successful securing long-term planning work in Spartanburg. The key to this success lay not so much with Nolen as with the efforts of community leaders to form a governmental body that had both the legal power and the financial ability to engage in planning. This organization was the progressive-minded Spartanburg Park Commission, created by legislation passed in the General Assembly in February 1920, with bonding authority as well as the power to acquire and develop parks.

Spartanburg in the early 1920s found itself on the leading edge of progressive city planning, with a small group of citizens seeking to improve the city before it grew out of control. In 1920 Spartanburg was one of the leading textile centers of the South. Its population had grown an astounding 98 percent between 1900 and 1920, to a total of 22,638 persons.<sup>32</sup> In a publicity campaign in 1921, city promoters boasted that “Spartanburg, with four railway lines radiating in six directions, is the best railway center in the state.” Spartanburg’s boosters also trumpeted the upstate city’s well-maintained hotels, trolley lines, institutions of higher learning, and environment.<sup>33</sup>

Nolen’s first contact with Spartanburg occurred in May 1920. Dr. Guy E. Snavelly, dean of the College of Practical Arts at Converse College and chairman of the chamber of commerce’s City Planning Committee, contacted

<sup>29</sup> Nolen to Stowe, October 11, 1921, JNP, Box 72.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> See Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*, 352-368, for a discussion of Grace and the development of Charleston during this period. See Edgar, *South Carolina*, 483-511, for an excellent discussion of the state’s troubled economy in the 1920s.

<sup>32</sup> Bureau of the Census, 1920.

<sup>33</sup> “Spartanburg,” *Spartanburg Herald*, 1921.

Nolen concerning a possible visit to Spartanburg.<sup>34</sup> Nolen replied that he was interested and laid out terms for such a visit. Skeptical of the city's planning prospects, however, Nolen felt compelled to add: "I think I should say frankly that I hesitate to take time for a visit unless there is a fairly definite prospect that city planning work is going on in Spartanburg, and that some one will be engaged to do it."<sup>35</sup>

That was just what Spartanburg's citizens had done. On February 24, 1920, a bill creating a park commission for Spartanburg passed the South Carolina House of Representatives, and shortly thereafter the Senate passed the measure. Under South Carolina law, municipal governments had very little authority; most was held by the county legislative delegations, which jealously guarded their power to set local taxes, create boards and commissions, and approve membership on those boards. In the act establishing the park commission, the new body was charged with the responsibility to "establish or extend parks, parkways, boulevards and connecting viaducts and subways, park comfort stations and children's playgrounds and public baths located within such city or the territory contiguous to such city." Though the measure as originally proposed had called for the city council to be authorized to "levy and collect an annual tax for the uses of the . . . Park Commission," this authority was stripped out by the House. The final version retained a \$50,000 bonding authority for the purpose of purchasing land and creating parks.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, city improvement had a much firmer foundation in Spartanburg than in Charleston. Snavelly again contacted Nolen in September 1920, proposing a visit by the noted planner for October 11, in which Nolen would spend the day "making a general observation of the city and its needs so that you could meet with the newly elected county senator and representatives at a dinner that night." Snavelly held out an enticing carrot to Nolen, noting that "our present plan is to have [the representatives] put a bill thru [sic] the legislature at its next session, authorizing the expenditure of a suitable amount for making a city plan for Spartanburg and vicinity." Expecting great things from a Nolen visit, Snavelly added that "in order to give them further moral courage, we would like for you to address the same evening a Chamber of Commerce forum."<sup>37</sup>

Nolen resisted the notion of a trip to Spartanburg in October without a firm commitment or without multiple stops to make the trip worthwhile. In November he wrote Snavelly that "nothing definite has turned up yet to justify my southern trip." Nolen hoped to sweeten a deal with the city,

<sup>34</sup> Nolen to Snavelly, May 18, 1920, JNP, Box 76.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, February 26, 1920.

<sup>37</sup> Snavelly to Nolen, October 5, 1920, JNP, Box 36.

however, by suggesting to Snavelly "the desirability of including in the contract for a general city planning study for Spartanburg an arrangement with the city planner for an additional year's services as consultant. In other words, a two year arrangement."<sup>38</sup> This would have been a highly lucrative contract for Nolen and may have attracted the planner to the South without the necessity of other stops.

It was not until Nolen had made his arrangements with Charleston that Snavelly was able to set up a visit to Spartanburg. Snavelly sent Nolen a telegram on January 12, 1921, stating, "See by news item that you are speaking in Charleston . . . interest of city planning work our committee would like very much to have you make proposed visit and preliminary observation of Spartanburg on your way back."<sup>39</sup> The fact that Nolen had arranged a trip through the South without including Spartanburg on his itinerary suggests that he had grown disenchanted with the prospect of planning there. Nevertheless, he wired Snavelly that "my southern schedule crowded but I could come to Spartanburg on a sleeper direct from Charleston."<sup>40</sup>

Nolen arrived in Spartanburg as planned on January 26. The local newspaper promoted his visit beforehand, editorializing that "all who are interested—and we all are—in the development of the city along lines designed to give it beauty and attractiveness, should attend the meeting."<sup>41</sup> Nolen's speech to the Spartanburg chamber was not as successful as his Charleston presentation, largely due to uncooperative weather. As the newspaper report noted the day after Nolen's speech, "With snow driving down in blizzard fashion, about 75 loyal citizens found their way to the Chamber of Commerce last night and heard . . . John Nolen on city planning." The newspaper went on to note that "Mr. Nolen, referring to the snow, said that it seemed as if Spartanburg was trying to cover up something which it did not wish him to see."<sup>42</sup>

In fact, Spartanburg was moving much farther forward in terms of planning than any other city in South Carolina. A bill pushed by the chamber of commerce as well as the newly-elected chairman of the park commission, William S. Glenn, passed in the 1921 session of the General Assembly. The bill dramatically expanded the authority of the park commission, empowering it "to lay out or cause to be laid out, a plan of city development covering the entire city limits, designating street projections, establishing building lines and restrictions, and making rules and regulations

<sup>38</sup> Nolen to Snavelly, November 16, 1920, JNP, Box 76.

<sup>39</sup> Snavelly to Nolen, January 12, 1921, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>40</sup> Nolen to Snavelly, January 14, 1921, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>41</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, January 22, 1921.

<sup>42</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, January 27, 1921.

as to buildings and the use and occupancy of premises in the city of Spartanburg."<sup>43</sup> This certainly represented the most significant empowerment of a planning body in South Carolina to date.

Shortly after passage of the act to create a "plan of city development," Snavely contacted Nolen, writing that "the activities of our City Planning committee of the Chamber of Commerce resulted in the passage of a law at the recent Legislature, which empowers the City Park Commission to employ a city planner before proceeding with their work in accepting and developing parks." The problem, of course, was money, and the leaders of Spartanburg were considering a three-way split in the payment for the plan. "In order to save their money and to obtain more public support," Snavely wrote, "the Park Commission is asking that City Council join with them on a one-third basis of responsibility and expense in obtaining a City planner." The financial burden of the plan would thus be paid equally by the park commission, the city council, and the chamber of commerce.<sup>44</sup>

It took several months for a final proposal between Nolen and city leaders to be concluded. Nolen's initial proposal was for \$10,000 to complete a comprehensive plan, which he immediately reduced to \$5,000 based on his prior experience with financially-strapped, smaller cities.<sup>45</sup> An official proposal to the park commission did not come from Nolen until August 1921. In addition to a detailed examination of existing conditions, it included a plan for an initial year of work to be completed in 1922 that would address streets and traffic problems, parks and parkways, and zoning. The cost of this first year was \$5,600, with additional expenses for hotels and travel not to exceed \$800. Nolen also sought a commitment for additional work for 1923 and 1924 at a rate of \$1,000 per year.<sup>46</sup>

The relevant bodies—the park commission, the city council, and the chamber of commerce—agreed to Nolen's terms for the first year. However, as E. B. Walker, secretary of the chamber of commerce, noted, the city council "did not take up that part of your proposals calling for consultation services during 1923-1924." Walker added that "the Chamber of Commerce has not considered this feature either." Compelled to insulate his organization from this feature of Nolen's proposal, Walker commented, "As the Park Commission, under the law, has been given City Planning authority, I feel that this part of your proposal should be handled and paid for exclusively by the Park Commission."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, March 20, 1921.

<sup>44</sup> Snavely to Nolen, April 13, 1921, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>45</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, February 19, 1921.

<sup>46</sup> Nolen to Phifer, August 4, 1921, JNP, Box 76.

<sup>47</sup> Walker to Nolen, September 17, 1921, JNP, Box 36.

That fall a contract was finalized with Nolen's firm and preliminary work on the first comprehensive plan for a city in South Carolina commenced. The plan's first steps involved the survey of existing conditions. As this work largely involved documents and maps from the city, Nolen did not make another trip to Spartanburg until late December 1921. As the *Spartanburg Herald* noted in its December 29 edition, "Dr. John Nolen . . . will arrive in the city today for the purpose of conferring with the city engineers, the park commission and to make additional plans for the final plat of the proposed changes in parkways, roads, buildings, and railroad lines."<sup>48</sup>

Just before his visit, Nolen expressed concern to Walker over public awareness of the plan. "What I want now is to find out from you what plans have been made for local publicity," he wrote. "In one sense, perhaps, it is not my business, but as you know, I am interested not only in having a plan made with sound recommendations, but also in having them carried through."<sup>49</sup> Nolen noted that "perhaps it [the publicity campaign] has been going on without my knowing," but that was wishful thinking.<sup>50</sup> There had been little in the way of public discussion about the fact that a comprehensive plan for Spartanburg was underway, and even less concerning its details. Nolen's visit in December generated some publicity, though there was no public announcement as to what the plans entailed. During his visit Nolen met with representatives of the chamber, the park commission, and Mayor J. F. Floyd to discuss his plan for the city. As reported in the *Spartanburg Herald*: "Mr. Nolen's maps, the map of existing conditions and the preliminary study map with the proposals marked in, were displayed again. Dr. Nolen, with constant reference to the maps, made a short, descriptive talk in which he thoroughly explained every phase of the plan. He expressed himself as being highly pleased with the situation here in Spartanburg."<sup>51</sup>

The comprehensive plan that Nolen created for Spartanburg in 1922 consisted of two parts: first, a "Civic Survey" that comprised a description of existing conditions in Spartanburg, including the population, transportation connections, streets, business and industry, housing, recreation, and public utilities; and second, the longer section of the report, the "City Planning Proposals" as put forward by Nolen. The planning proposals were summarized into six key items: 1) various railroad problems; 2) system of main thoroughfares; 3) park system; 4) enlargement of existing schoolgrounds; 5) central area of the city; 6) zone plan.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, December 29, 1921.

<sup>49</sup> Nolen to Walker, December 17, 1921, JNP, Box 76.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, January 1, 1922.

<sup>52</sup> John Nolen, "Spartanburg," plan dated 1922, JNP, Box 19.



Though the final plan would not be delivered to the park commission until the fall of 1922, preliminary findings were brought to the attention of city leaders during Nolen's visit in December 1921 as well as in follow-up visits by Nolen and his associates in March of the following year.<sup>53</sup> Nolen's planning proposals, though forward thinking, were hardly radical. Few would disagree that one of Spartanburg's most critical problems in terms of planning was the presence of rail lines across its major streets that could block traffic at any time of day or night. As to school grounds, Nolen was a firm believer in using schools for communal as well as educational purposes, and there was an obvious problem with both the size of city schools and with the facilities provided. There was also clearly a problem with park and recreation space in Spartanburg, and Nolen believed that the city had a rare opportunity to create a circular beltway of green space using neglected creek beds. In addition, zoning was becoming increasingly popular in cities around the country, and few would disagree that rapidly-growing Spartanburg needed a zoning plan to rationalize land use.<sup>54</sup>

Two of Nolen's proposals, however, drew quick fire. The first was for the improvement of the downtown by constructing a new central area of the city on Kirby Hill, at the intersection of Church and Henry Streets. This represented the highest point in downtown Spartanburg, and in typical Nolen fashion, he planned for a large plaza surrounded by government buildings, an auditorium, and private businesses. The central focus of Spartanburg since its inception had been the large, open rectangular space on Main Street called Morgan Square, and conservative city officials wanted to keep it that way. The plan to reorient downtown Spartanburg from Morgan Square to Kirby Hill was never given serious consideration. Even Glenn, chairman of the park commission and Nolen's greatest supporter in the city, wrote Nolen after presentation of this idea: "I cannot convince myself that this is just the location. . . . Possibly a different treatment of your proposed Civic Center might eliminate some of the objections."<sup>55</sup>

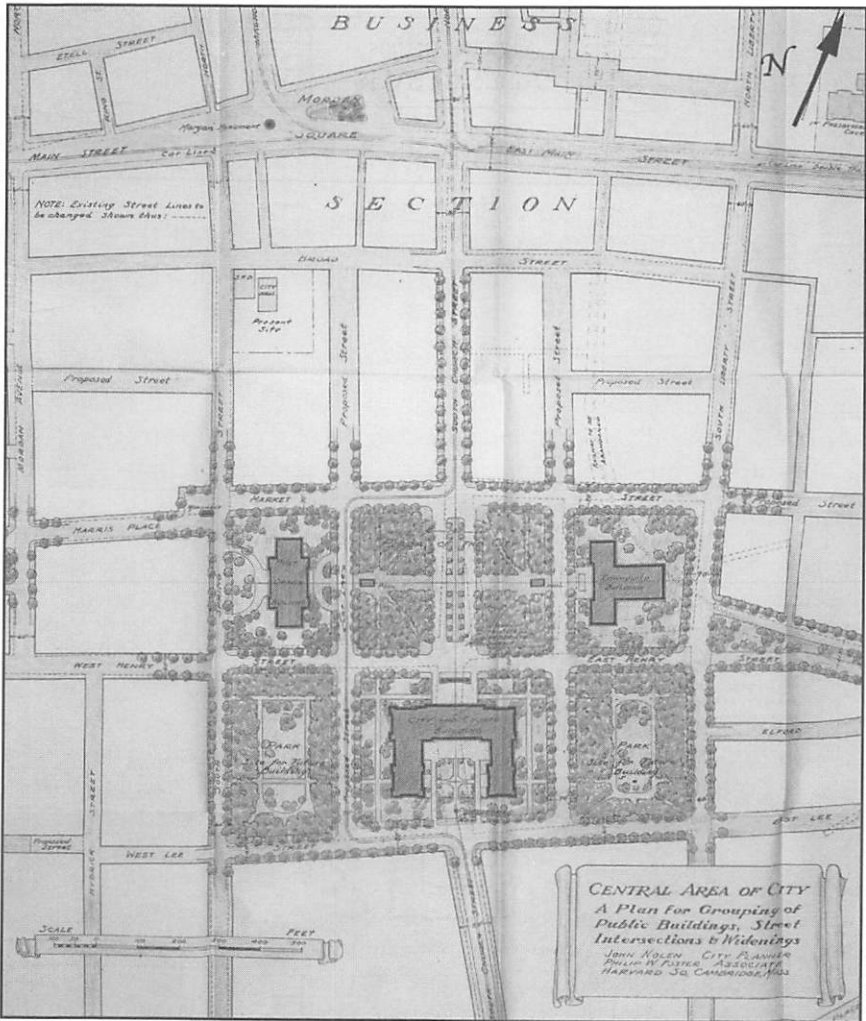
The second controversial proposal, the one that would eventually kill the plan, was street widening. Nolen noted that the streets of downtown Spartanburg, like those in many other cities in the United States, were narrow and congested. As Nolen wrote in his plan for the city, "The fact remains that the original layout of streets [in Spartanburg] is primarily conspicuous for its lack of merit."<sup>56</sup> The arrival of the automobile, which was competing with pedestrians, horse-drawn carriages, and electric streetcars, made the streets of Spartanburg dangerous places.

<sup>53</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, March 5, 1922; *ibid.*, March 16, 1922.

<sup>54</sup> Nolen, "Spartanburg," JNP, Box 19.

<sup>55</sup> Glenn to Nolen, February 20, 1922, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>56</sup> Nolen, "Spartanburg," p. 34, JNP, Box 19.



Detail of John Nolen's plan for the reorientation of downtown Spartanburg, 1922. The tree-lined avenue running north-south through the center of the map is Church Street. Main Street intersects Church at Morgan Square in the business section. Nolen intended the U-shaped edifice south of the plaza on Henry Street to be a city and county government building. Flanking it on either side were to be parks that could, if needed, serve as the sites for future buildings. The building to the northwest of the city and county building was to be a post office, and the one to the northeast was to be a community building. Courtesy of the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, N.Y.

Nolen's solution for Spartanburg was to widen the two major corridors in the downtown area, the east-west trending Main Street and the north-south trending Church Street. Acknowledging Spartanburg's recent population growth, Nolen made note that "this increase in the use of city streets is felt at all times but reaches the state where it is dangerous to life and a handicap to business at the very times and points where it is least desirable to have such conditions occur."<sup>57</sup> Nolen concluded that "Main Street and Church Street will always be the main arteries of Spartanburg and the first step in the planning of any system of thoroughfares should be the recognition of that fact."<sup>58</sup> Nolen proposed widening Main Street from around eighty feet to 100 feet and Church Street from around sixty feet to eighty feet. According to Nolen, "These proposed widenings are not to be made at once but gradually by the establishment of building lines and the subsequent building up of the streets on the new location."<sup>59</sup>

After Nolen's visit in March, the park commission adopted the basic planning proposals that formed the core of the plan and pressed the city council to do likewise. Chairman Glenn was particularly concerned with the issue of street widenings and building lines, but the council was reluctant to adopt the changes. As the local newspaper related in June, "The rule to regulate the building line was suggested to council by the city park commission months ago upon the recommendation of John Nolen, the city planner, and council has had the matter under consideration ever since."<sup>60</sup>

Challenges to the Nolen plan appeared before city council even voted on the plan. A new office building proposed by a local physician on a downtown street brought the Nolen plan and its building lines to the front burner. At a city council meeting in early June 1922 concerning a permit for the new building, the *Herald* said that an exasperated council sent the Nolen plan into the "scrap heap . . . when [it] granted Dr. N. T. Clark permission to erect an office building flush with the sidewalk in front of his home." The problem, as council members saw it, was that they "had grave doubts as to the constitutionality of such an ordinance" regulating building lines. The newspaper added that "attorneys have given as their opinion that such an ordinance would be depriving citizens of the use of their property without due process of law and would in fact be confiscatory."<sup>61</sup>

Though Dr. Clark's building generated controversy, the flash point in the planning debate concerned a structure first announced with a small notice in the *Herald* in April 1922 under the headline, "New Building [To]

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>60</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, June 4, 1922.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

Be Built on North Church." Several Spartanburg businessmen proposed erecting a two-story brick building on North Church Street, with retail on the first floor and office space on the second. The front of the building was to be built to the existing property line, which would have exceeded by several feet the building line proposed in the Nolen plan.<sup>62</sup>

The conflict over the North Church Street building ignited a summer storm of controversy that represented one of the first land-use conflicts in South Carolina. Immediately after the June meeting in which the Nolen plan was placed on the "scrap heap," members of city council and the park commission met to discuss the building lines issue. For Glenn of the park commission, this was an effort to salvage the plan before city council completely abandoned it. He realized that, as the *Herald* editorialized before the meeting, "Nothing is more difficult perhaps than the first steps of bringing order out of a city that has just grown up and has not given thought to its future development."<sup>63</sup> Glenn's efforts to revive the plan were successful, and at a meeting on June 8 the city council issued a notice that the building on North Church Street had to conform to the new building lines contained in the Nolen plan.<sup>64</sup> The owners of the property refused to comply with the notice to set the building back, using the argument that the only means by which the building lines could be established was through condemnation by the city under power of eminent domain, which required compensation to the property owners.<sup>65</sup>

City council elected to move forward with the action, creating a test case for the Nolen plan. At a meeting on June 13, the council voted to condemn a strip of property a few feet wide. The move was not without its critics, however, as the newspaper noted:

The action of city council in deciding to adopt the Nolan [*sic*] plan for the gradual widening of the streets of the city has been a principal topic of conversations since Friday, and public sentiment seems to be very much divided. Many leading citizens and property owners declare council is doing the right thing while other equally leading citizens and property owners declare council is making a mistake. They do not concede that the plan will be a good one under any circumstances and they also contend that even if it were desirable the cost would be prohibitive.<sup>66</sup>

The *Herald* went on to editorialize that, with the controversy over the North Church Street building, the public will "awaken and the result will be either

<sup>62</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, April 29, 1922.

<sup>63</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, June 8, 1922.

<sup>64</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, June 9, 1922.

<sup>65</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, June 11, 1922.

<sup>66</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, June 13, 1922.

the junking of city planning, or the better part of it, or the most revolutionary step this town has ever taken."<sup>67</sup>

By June 17 the city council had named six citizens to serve on a jury of condemnation and invited the property owners to do the same. The condemnation proceedings were halted by a temporary restraining order granted to the property owners by circuit court judge T. J. Mauldin based on the complaint filed by the owners which called the Nolen plan "a purely visionary and impractical scheme" that might "require one hundred years or longer to effect."<sup>68</sup>

Nolen was kept informed of the controversy through letters from Walker, the secretary of the chamber of commerce. Walker had sent a letter and clippings from the *Spartanburg Herald* on June 10 as the crisis began to unfold. In terms of the building lines, Nolen stated, "There is no question of the desirability—in fact, the imperative need—of taking steps looking toward the ultimate widening of Spartanburg main streets, and it is a test of the City government and of the citizenship to see what methods can be adopted." Nolen added, however, that "I do not see what we can do further to help you" in managing the controversy.<sup>69</sup> In a letter written the same day, Walker appeared to be getting cold feet, writing Nolen that "I am just wondering if we are not attempting to put some of your recommendations into effect too soon."<sup>70</sup> Nolen, on receipt of the Walker letter, sensed that his plan was running into serious trouble even before it was completed and quickly changed his tune, inquiring of Walker on June 26: "What is the next step? Is there anything that I can do?" Returning to an earlier point, Nolen asserted that "there is unquestionably a need in Spartanburg, as in practically all other places, of more publicity in order that the people may understand city planning and the reasons for backing its proposals."<sup>71</sup>

The matter came to a head in July before Judge Mauldin in a hearing to determine if a permanent injunction against condemnation should be granted. In testimony before the judge, city officials stated that "their idea was to make this [Church Street] building conform to the Nolen [*sic*] building line, and then, as other buildings were erected, make them conform to the same line."<sup>72</sup> Spartanburg's Mayor Floyd actually turned out to be an effective witness for the property owners, expressing the frustration that

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, June 28, 1922.

<sup>69</sup> Nolen to Walker, June 13, 1922, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>70</sup> Walker to Nolen, June 13, 1922, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>71</sup> Nolen to Walker, June 26, 1922, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>72</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, July 12, 1922.

many elected officials have felt towards professional planners in an exchange with the plaintiffs' attorney:

"Mr. Mayor, did you employ Mr. Nolan [*sic*]?" asked Mr. Bomar.

"I did not," replied Mayor Floyd emphatically.

"Who did employ him?" asked the attorney.

"By the Chamber of Commerce, the city park commission and the city council," was the reply.

"How much did he receive?" asked Mr. Bomar.

"Six thousand dollars," said the mayor.

"And what have you received in return?" Mr. Bomar wanted to know.

"Some maps and a lot of trouble," was the mayor's reply.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the mayor's insistence that Spartanburg had received little of substance from Nolen, the city's attorney, C. Erskine Daniel, gave a spirited defense of the plan and the city's right to execute that plan to Judge Mauldin. In his written statement, Daniel proclaimed that "an enlightened progress demands an enlightened vision." He added that the park commissioners, city council members, and chamber of commerce members who employed Nolen "did not hope to see the city beautiful as if by magic, but they realized that a plan must precede building, and have evidenced their faith in its ultimate good to the city, looking forward and not backward."<sup>74</sup>

Judge Mauldin rendered his decision on July 18, 1922. He supported the defendants, deciding that the city had the right to condemn property based on a plan that called for street widening. The decision dissolved the temporary injunction that had been granted several weeks prior and allowed the city to continue with its condemnation action. The decision cited the inadequacy of Church Street as a commercial corridor and noted that this inadequacy would only grow over time.<sup>75</sup> Nolen was immediately advised by Walker that the city had prevailed. "We feel that is a great victory," he wrote, "and is the beginning of great things in the future development of Spartanburg."<sup>76</sup>

The decision by Judge Mauldin opened the floodgates to new planning initiatives in Spartanburg. The owners of the North Church Street property decided not to appeal the judge's ruling, though it took three condemnation

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, July 15, 1921.

<sup>75</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, July 19, 1922.

<sup>76</sup> Walker to Nolen, July 20, 1922, JNP, Box 36.

hearings to put the matter to rest.<sup>77</sup> In addition to widening activities on North Church Street, survey crews began working to establish a line for the widening of West Main Street to 100 feet. The park commission under Glenn began making plans to construct a viaduct on West Main to take the road over the railroad tracks, one of the major impediments to the flow of traffic in and out of the downtown area. Other streets were considered for widening, and plans were underway to extend North Church Street to Cleveland Park, the city’s new suburban recreation area. Taken together, the events of the late summer of 1922 represented an incredibly active period of planning for Spartanburg’s future.<sup>78</sup> Nolen himself briefly visited the city in August and declared that “it should be comparatively easy for the city plan to be applied to the situation” in Spartanburg.<sup>79</sup>

The August stopover was Nolen’s last visit to the city. On November 15, 1922, Nolen forwarded the final plan to Glenn, including ten maps, ranging from the map of existing conditions to the new plan for the central area of the city. Also included was a zoning plan for the city and a map detailing the proposed park system. Nolen wrote Glenn that “we have always taken pains to put our reports in good shape, but I doubt if we have ever done better than in the case of Spartanburg.”<sup>80</sup> Nolen added that the next step, printing the report, was critical to its eventual success.

Nolen did not know that his plan was dead on arrival. Even before Nolen forwarded his finished plan to the park commission, opposition among Spartanburg’s business and political elite to the plan and the park commission that supported it was beginning to crystallize. The opposition movement became public in early January 1923, when a move began to abolish the park commission. At a meeting on January 2, the county delegation to the General Assembly heard arguments for and against the park commission and the Nolen plan. At the morning session, J. T. Harris, one of the owners of the North Church Street building that had ignited the controversy, as well as others spoke against the commission and the building lines contained in the Nolen plan. According to the *Herald*, Harris told the delegation that “nothing that had ever happened in Spartanburg had done as much harm as the appointment of the park commission.” Apparently completely disgusted with planners coming from outside,

<sup>77</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, September 9, 1922.

<sup>78</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, August 24, 1922; *ibid.*, September 14, 1922; *ibid.*, September 23, 1922.

<sup>79</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, August 8, 1922.

<sup>80</sup> Nolen to Glenn, November 15, 1922, JNP, Box 36.

Harris "stressed the importance for the future development of Spartanburg that this bone of contention be removed and the city be allowed to develop as its natural resources would dictate."<sup>81</sup>

Despite efforts by the park commission and the chamber, a bill was introduced into the legislature on January 17 abolishing the commission and requiring that "all papers, maps, documents and property of any kind whatsoever now in the possession of the park commission . . . shall be turned over to the city council of the city of Spartanburg."<sup>82</sup> The *Herald* editorialized that "the delegation to the legislature should consider well the proposal to abolish the Park Commission before having it enacted into law. The establishment of this body had a thoroughly sound and valuable idea behind it and was in line with what many other growing cities, repenting of their helter skelter unplanned ways of expanding, have found it advantageous to do."<sup>83</sup>

The chamber of commerce organized a meeting attended by around thirty residents and three members of the county delegation. The advocates for the park commission spoke in favor of the commission without mentioning the Nolen plan. As one of the speakers put it, "What I plead for is that we have a park commission which will prevent the existence of eyesores in our streets and alleys, which will make the city more beautiful, and which will do many other things for the growth of our city." The same speaker added that "city council already had enough to do without taking on the added duties of a park commission."<sup>84</sup>

Clearly, however, there was no public hue and cry over the park commission issue or the abandonment of the Nolen plan. On January 26, the House passed the measure abolishing the park commission, and on January 31, the Senate did likewise.<sup>85</sup> Defenders of the commission, mainly members of the chamber of commerce, made the long trip to Columbia for one last appeal to Governor Thomas G. McLeod in person.<sup>86</sup> Though McLeod was sympathetic to the delegation, the structure of South Carolina's government gave considerable weight to local legislation, and he had little choice but to sign the bill, which he did on February 15.<sup>87</sup>

Shortly after the demise of the park commission, Nolen contacted Glenn, who had remained largely silent throughout the legislative battle, and inquired as to the feasibility of sending the Spartanburg plan to the

<sup>81</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, January 3, 1923.

<sup>82</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, January 18, 1923.

<sup>83</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, January 21, 1923.

<sup>84</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, January 23, 1923.

<sup>85</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, January 27, 1923; *ibid.*, February 1, 1923.

<sup>86</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, February 15, 1923.

<sup>87</sup> *Spartanburg Herald*, February 16, 1923.



National City Planning Conference to be held that year in Baltimore.<sup>88</sup> Nolen apparently did not receive a response, and in June sent another missive to Glenn concerning the printing of the Spartanburg plan, since "this seems to me one of the most important matters in connection with the program for the improvement of Spartanburg." In searching for a way to see his plan printed, Nolen referenced his recollection "that Mr. Walker, then Secretary of the . . . Chamber of Commerce, said if other methods failed, the Chamber of Commerce would see that the city plan report was put in print and circulated."<sup>89</sup>

Again, this elicited no response. Nolen did not actually get any communication from Glenn until January 1924. The letter did not concern Nolen's plan, but instead involved a move by Southern Railway to survey Glenn's farm north of the city, presumably with regards to a possible property purchase. Concerning his property, Glenn wrote Nolen that "I am wondering if you would have opportunity to consider this transaction, having in mind the ultimate good of the City, and the Railroad as well, without incurring too much cost or inconvenience." Indicative of Glenn's disenchantment with his role in the planning process and its inauspicious end in Spartanburg, he concluded his letter to Nolen by stating that "after receiving this information, if you wish to communicate with the City Council, the Chamber of Commerce, or the local papers, I shall be glad to have you do so, but prefer that you do not use my name."<sup>90</sup>

Giving up on Glenn for printing the plan, Nolen contacted the chamber of commerce, writing to the new secretary of the chamber, R. B. Beal. Nolen wrote Beal that his predecessor had intended to see the plan published and "believed that the Chamber of Commerce would see it through out of its own funds or by raising a special fund."<sup>91</sup> Beal quickly shot back that "the Chamber of Commerce has not been in position to finance publication out of its own funds." He added that "I am hopeful that a special fund will be raised within the next month or so and in that way we could get a distribution of the plan, which it justifies."<sup>92</sup>

The Nolen plan for Spartanburg was never printed or adopted by city council. In 1930, however, six years after submission of the plan, the Spartanburg city engineer contacted Nolen concerning the zoning plan that he had completed. The engineer wrote Nolen that "zoning . . . has taken on a new life, due to the fact that the City Council has appointed a zoning

<sup>88</sup> Nolen to Glenn, April 16, 1923, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>89</sup> Nolen to Glenn, June 13, 1923, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>90</sup> Glenn to Nolen, January 16, 1924, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>91</sup> Nolen to Beal, February 15, 1924, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>92</sup> Beal to Nolen, February 27, 1924, JNP, Box 36.

commission."<sup>93</sup> The engineer asked several questions concerning the plan, including street widths and building set-back lines as laid out in the plan. Nolen's response, written by one of his associates, was tepid at best, providing little in the way of information.<sup>94</sup> A member of the zoning commission also contacted Nolen "to ascertain if it would be possible for this commission to make an arrangement with you by which you could act as our consultant in advising of the steps to be taken."<sup>95</sup> Nolen expressed mild interest in the arrangement through a reply by an associate in his firm, but at this point in Nolen's career he was more interested in the numerous national and international planning organizations in which he was involved than in working on a zoning plan for a small southern city. There is no evidence that Nolen, who passed away in 1937, made another trip to Spartanburg or provided any substantial information to the commission.

#### CONCLUSION

In the 1920s, both Charleston and Spartanburg sought to position themselves in the forefront of progressive cities of the New South by engaging the services of America's most renowned professional planner. After its initial flirtation with John Nolen, Charleston's efforts quickly ran aground, due in large measure to the downturn in the city's economic fortunes during the decade as well as the lack of interest in planning by the city's powerful political interests. Spartanburg was more successful, finding the wherewithal to contract for Nolen's services, but the plan created for the city fell afoul of the city's business elite, many of whom counted themselves among those who espoused the principles of the progressive New South but abandoned those ideals when it conflicted with business.

In the case of Spartanburg, the city did not actually get an approved zoning plan until 1950, nearly thirty years after the plan created by Nolen was sent to the park commission. Many of Spartanburg's problems identified by Nolen in 1922 remain: the principal streets of the city are still subject to long closures by trains; many of the streets are still of variable widths and congested; there remains a shortage of park space in the city; and the downtown area still lacks focus, with the traditional center of the city, Morgan Square, today functioning as a parking lot. Interestingly, there is no copy of the Nolen plan in the Spartanburg County Public Library or in city hall, and few even know that in the 1920s a comprehensive plan—the

<sup>93</sup> Adams to Nolen, February 23, 1930, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>94</sup> Nolen (by Hartzog) to Adams, March 4, 1930, JNP, Box 36.

<sup>95</sup> Barnwell to Nolen, March 4, 1930, JNP, Box 36.

first in South Carolina—was completed for the city by a world-renowned planner.<sup>96</sup>

The engagement by both Charleston and Spartanburg with John Nolen suggests that the progressive spirit of the New South was alive and well in the Palmetto State in the 1920s, embodied in persons such as Stowe of Charleston and Snavely, Glenn, Walker, and Mauldin of Spartanburg.<sup>97</sup> These planning efforts, however, were short-circuited by political and economic realities of the period. Politically and economically, city governments were largely controlled by the state legislature as well as local elites that may have been interested in municipal progress but were loathe to spend the money necessary to make large-scale improvements. Nevertheless, it is clear that America's premier planner felt that the cities of South Carolina held great promise, a promise which the modern era has seen fulfilled.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Timothy J. Kuether, Director of Development Services, City of Spartanburg, April 11, 2001.

<sup>97</sup> For a more detailed review of South Carolina's progress in the 1920s, see Mary Katherine Davis Cann, "The Morning After: South Carolina in the Jazz Age" (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 1984).

# SOUTHERN INDUSTRIALIZATION AND NORTHERN INDUSTRIAL NETWORKS: THE NEW SOUTH TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN COLUMBIA AND LYMAN, SOUTH CAROLINA

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AN OLD SOUTHERN CITY WITH ESTABLISHED TRANSPORTATION lines and power sources, Columbia, South Carolina, appeared to be an ideal location for New South industrial aspirations. Just up the road, Spartanburg, South Carolina, competed with Columbia for resources and, at times, surpassed the capital city in its commercial and manufacturing activities. While small cotton textile plants operated in and around the South Carolina piedmont before the Civil War, the vast bulk of the region's commerce was in the transport and trade of raw cotton, with manufacturing establishments overwhelmingly concentrated on the production of iron, lumber, cottonseed oil, and flour. According to one promotional booklet published by the municipal board of trade, there were no cotton textile plants operating in Columbia in 1871. But the existing trade in cotton, expanding railroad and other transportation and communication connections, and the growing supply of electrical power suggested to many that the potential ingredients for successful cotton textile manufacturing were available in both of these cities.<sup>1</sup>

As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, the citizens of Columbia and Spartanburg experienced the arrival and development of the textile industry in their communities. In doing so, like many southern communities, they shared experiences related to changing economic and social structures. Columbia and Spartanburg also shared, more specifically, the arrival of one particular established, northern-owned-and-operated textile corporation, the Pacific Mills. In 1916 Pacific Mills purchased the four Whaley Mills in Columbia and, just six years later, constructed a textile manufacturing and finishing facility on the outskirts of Spartanburg,

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<sup>1</sup> John Hammond Moore, *Columbia and Richland County: A South Carolina Community, 1740-1990* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 211-309; Fenelon De Vere Smith, "The Economic Development of the Textile Industry in the Columbia, South Carolina, Area from 1790 through 1916" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1952).