



How  
**MEMPHIS**  
Became the  
City Beautiful..

# History

The City Beautiful Commission—the first in the nation—might be defined as “good outdoor housekeeping” on a city-wide scale. The Commission was established in 1930 when Memphis was a mushrooming city beset by the usual growing pains of slum areas, grime and trash. Memphis had few natural beauties to offset these eyesores, such as mountains and lakes, and little physical charm such as New Orleans grill work and New England countryside. The idea of the City Beautiful Commission was conceived by the late E. H. Crump, prominent Memphis leader, who felt that the best way to beautify the city as a whole was to enlist the support of public-spirited Memphis women.

Time has proved the wisdom of the city fathers. So well has this enthusiastic band of “civic-housekeepers” accomplished its mission that today Memphis proudly bears the name “The City Beautiful.” Tree-lined streets—well-tended yards and homes—green grass and tidy sidewalks give Memphis the beauty that comes with shining cleanliness. Not only has the City Beautiful Commission changed the appearance of large sections of Memphis—it has also made Memphis a model to the entire nation. Today the Memphis Plan of beautification is studied by civic groups from all over the country.

One of the brightest stars in the City Beautiful Commission's crown is the annual spring Clean-Up, Paint-Up, Fix-Up Campaign, conducted in cooperation with other departments of the City Government and the Chamber of Commerce. Memphis has the distinction of being the only city in the nation to be recognized nationally in its population class for 18 consecutive years. It is the only city to receive the highest award three times as “The Nation's Cleanest City.”

Each year, the City Beautiful Commission maintains a booth at the Mid-South Fair where visitors from all over the Tri-States can learn of the Commission's crusade for cleanliness and beauty in Memphis.



# Making Memphians "beauty-conscious"... a year 'round job



*Miss City Beautiful—shown here cutting the ribbon at the opening of a new store—helps dramatize the work of the Commission.*



*Illuminated displays like this one make Memphis a fairyland during the Commission-sponsored Outdoor Christmas Lights competition.*

The success of a city-wide program of cleanliness and beautification depends ultimately on the response of the individual citizen. In a sense, the City Beautiful Commission is the "spear-head"—arousing citizens and spurring them on to greater efforts. To awaken Memphians to their responsibilities, the City Beautiful Commission throws a spotlight on its activities via such city-wide events as the selection of "Miss City Beautiful" during the annual Cleanup Campaign. The selection of this personable young lady and her subsequent trip to the nation's capitol are recorded fully in the local newspapers and serve to dramatize the work of the Commission.

Another Commission program of wide civic interest is the annual Outdoor Christmas Lights competition. This event encourages the use of outdoor trees for decoration and helps conserve evergreens. At the same time, it makes Memphis a city of sparkling lights during the holidays. Awards are given for commercial, institutional, residential and community lighting on the basis of theme and originality, general appearance and effectiveness of lighting. The contest, held in cooperation with one of the local newspapers, has attracted considerable favorable attention not only from Memphians, but from holiday visitors to the city, many of whom stop over just to view the spectacular lighting displays.

Memphians of all ages enjoy the big parade that climaxes the annual Clean-Up, Paint-Up, Fix-Up campaign. This mile-long parade down Main Street presents the good work of Dr. CuPuFu, (Clean-Up, Paint-Up, Fix-Up) in the form of colorful floats representing all participating agencies.

To encourage cleanliness, the Commission offers a special service to citizens at no extra cost to the taxpayer. Special pickups of brush, trash, leaves and grass are made when requested by telephone. This is in addition to regular garbage and trash pickups, and it helps to cut down on fall fires.



*Visitors to the Mid-South Fair learn of Commission activities at the City Beautiful Commission booth.*



*All Memphis turns out for the mile-long Clean-Up parade, a highlight of the annual Clean-Up Campaign.*



# The work of the City Beautiful Commission can be divided into two broad categories: (1) Cleanliness and (2) Beautification.

## Cleanliness:

With the zeal of a housewife embarking on "spring cleaning," the City Beautiful Commission wages a 365-day-a-year campaign against grime and dirt.

Over the past two years, City Beautiful has purchased and placed over 300 trash containers (in addition to the trash containers put out by the City of Memphis), at transfer points, shopping centers, parks and in the downtown area. The containers are attractively painted and are maintained by the Sanitation Department.

Each year the Commission kicks off the year's work with the week-long Clean-Up, Paint-Up, Fix-Up Campaign, held in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce. This city-wide campaign serves to enlist concerted effort on the part of the city and its citizens to clean up both public and private properties. Highlights of the campaign are the Kick-Off Luncheon, Miss City Beautiful Contest, Pictorial Art Contest and Anti-litter program in the schools, and a bus tour through the city. Not only does the entire city benefit from this intensive "spring cleaning"—but more important, the campaign develops a sense of civic responsibility in the thousands of school children who actively participate.

In cooperation with the Health Department, the Commission makes an annual house-to-house inspection of garbage cans. The Commission also makes an annual survey of commercial and industrial property and follows it up with recommendations for landscaping and planting. Certificates of merit are awarded where property has been attractively landscaped and well-maintained. Property owners are grateful for this service and, in most cases, readily cooperate in complying with the Commission's recommendations.

During annual Fire Prevention Week in

October, the Commission assists the Fire Department by sending out thousands of letters to property owners, requesting a checkup of fire hazards in the home and place of business.

Other projects in the Commission's year-round Cleanliness campaign include: the Anti-litter Campaign, held in conjunction with the Junior Chamber of Commerce; Beautified and Improved Alleys Contest; and Improved and Beautified Back Yards and Sanitation Areas Contests.

## Beautification

In the very beginning, the work of the City Beautiful Commission was built around the idea of making Memphians flower-conscious by promoting the planting of gardens, trees and shrubs. As years passed, the program grew to include the elimination of unsightly and unsanitary spots from the city scene.

The first project of the Commission was the complete transformation of the Memphis riverfront. When the Commission was organized, the riverfront was the "back door" of the city. Ill-kept and dilapidated river shanties formed a jagged line along the waterfront. Trash and high weeds assaulted the eye of the visitor to Memphis. Today, thanks to the efforts of the Commission, the riverfront has become the "front door" of the city—with sparkling cleanliness as a welcome mat to newcomers. A beautifully landscaped scenic drive winds along the river's edge, bordered with colorful roses and flowering trees. Rubbish heaps have been cleared—unsightly shacks razed—and the caving embankment filled in.

One of the most successful of the Commission's beautification endeavors has been the institution of Memorial Flowering Tree Trails. For many years, the system of tree-lined parkways skirting parts of the city has impressed visitors with seasonal beauty.

Today, our Memorial Flowering Tree Trails of magnolia, dogwood and crabapple are nationally known and have won for Memphis the title of "the city of beautiful trees." During the past two years, more than one thousand trees have been purchased and planted on City-owned property.

The City Beautiful Commission enjoys the benefits of the free advisory services of leading landscape architects of the city for the maintenance and planting of parks and parkways. Each architect is assigned a given area. While any new planting in that area is given to him at the recognized fee, the architect offers his advice, where design is not called for, as his civic contribution.

Other highlights of the Commission's program of beautification are:

- Spring planting with emphasis on crepe myrtle and holleys.
- Creation of outdoor living areas and beautification of yards.
- Sponsoring of tree planting during Arbor Time—October to March.



Hundreds attend the annual luncheon, launching the Clean-Up Campaign.





*This beautiful tree-shaded thoroughfare is an outstanding example of the planned landscaping promoted throughout Memphis by the Commission.*



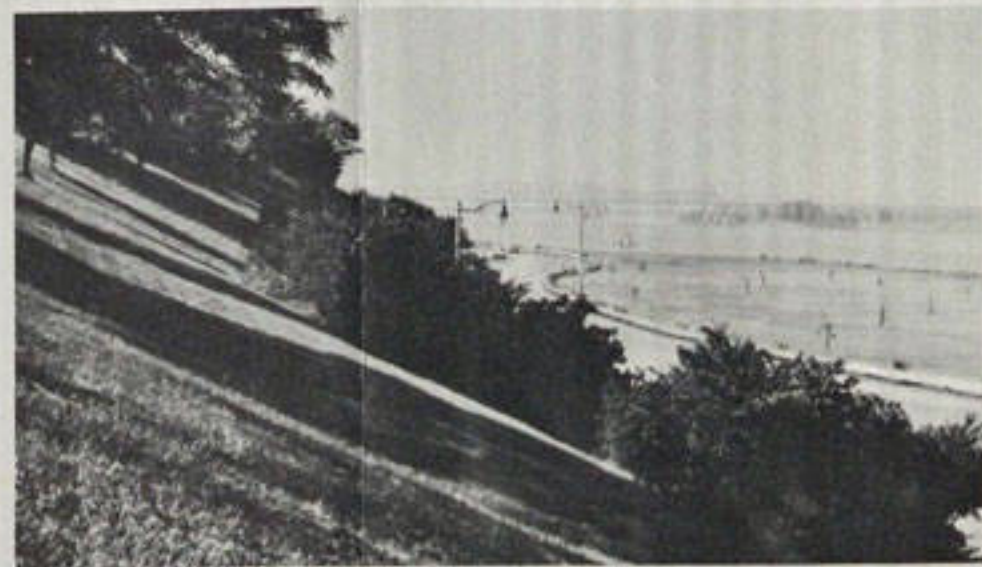
*BEFORE—Litter and garbage made an eyesore of this parking area.*



*AFTER—Following a Commission inspection, trash and litter were cleared.*



*BEFORE—This was the Memphis waterfront before public-spirited Memphis women launched their beautification campaign.*



*AFTER—Today, green grass, trees and artistic landscaping make Riverside Drive a scenic attraction.*



*Visitors to Memphis are greeted by this impressive roster of service luncheon clubs—a beautification project of the Commission.*



*BEFORE—This time-worn City Service Station was a challenge to the Spring Clean-Up Campaign.*



*AFTER—With a fresh coat of paint and repairs, the building emerged shining and ready for business.*



# Organization

The City Beautiful Commission is unique in that it is composed entirely of women who have official status with the City of Memphis and who work solely for the beautification of Memphis.

The Commission began operation under the Mayor in 1930, but it is now a part of the Public Works Department and operates under a budget passed upon by the City Commission. The City Beautiful Commission consists of a Volunteer Chairman, Vice Chairman and a Volunteer Board of 23 members. The Commissioner of Public Works nominates members and the City Commission appoints each to a one year term. The paid staff consists of an executive secretary, an office secretary, a field supervisor and two white and two Negro inspectors.

Each board member is assigned a section of the city which she canvasses for litter, high grass and weeds, planting that obstructs intersections, and unhealthy and unsightly conditions. These findings are turned over to the paid staff, which investigates the conditions and makes an all-out effort to get them corrected by appealing to civic pride. When necessary, the staff refers the conditions to the proper Department of the City.

Garden Clubs, Parent Teacher Associations, Civic Clubs and other groups select members from their own organizations to be representatives to the Commission. These 200 volunteer representatives further the work of the Commission by reporting any conditions that need to be corrected. The civic groups also cooperate by furnishing plants, trees and also money for beautification projects, with the City Beautiful Commission furnishing the landscape plans and the Park Commission, School Board and other Departments of the City Government giving their cooperation.

Each year, a City Beautiful Board Member is appointed by the Chairman to work with the Planning Commission, the Downtown Association, the Traffic Advisory Committee and the Riverfront Development Committee.

## City Beautiful Commission

(Sec. 90, 189b) The duties and powers of said Commission shall be to study, investigate, develop and carry out plans for improving the health, sanitation, safety, and cleanliness of the City of Memphis by beautifying the streets, highways, alleys, bayous, lots, yards and other similar places in said city; to aid in the prevention of fires, diseases and other casualties by the removal and elimination of trash and other debris from the streets, highways, alleys, lots, yards, plots and other similar places; to encourage the placing, planting and/or preservation of trees, flowers, plants, shrubbery and other objects of ornamentation in said city; protect song birds and other wild fowl; advise with and recommend plans to other agencies of the city for the beautification of said city and otherwise promote public interest in the general improvement of the appearance of said city; provided, however, that nothing herein shall be construed to abridge or change the powers and duties of the other commissions, departments, boards and like agencies of the City of Memphis.

The Commission shall consist of not exceeding twenty-five members, who shall be of lawful age, residents of Shelby County and shall be appointed by the Board of Commissioners of the City of Memphis on nomination by the Commissioner of Public Works, who shall designate one of the members of the Commission to be the Chairman thereof. Term of all members of the Commission shall be one year, terms of all members of the Commission shall expire on the thirty-first day of December of each year. All of the members of the Commission shall serve without pay. The Commissioner of Public Works shall nominate and the Board of Commissioners approve an Executive Secretary of said Commission and the compensation if any, of the Executive Secretary shall be fixed by the Board of Commissioners of the City.

Provision shall be made in the budget of said department for funds to assist in the carrying out of the purposes of this ordinance.

It shall be the duty of the City Beautiful Commission, on the first day of January and July of each year, to file with the Mayor and Board of Commissioners of the City of Memphis, a written report of the work performed and results accomplished, and the receipt and disbursements of all moneys allotted to and received by said Commission.

# Plans for the Future . . .

As any housewife knows, the price of cleanliness and beauty is eternal vigilance and hard work. For that reason, the hundreds of busy ladies of the City Beautiful Commission rarely take time to look back—they are far too absorbed working in the present—and planning for the future.

One of the most important projects planned by the Commission for the future is the beautification of Memphis with artistic fountains. One fountain, to grace the new Cossitt Library overlooking the river, is now underway, and the Commission is encouraging builders to include fountains in their plans for other City buildings.

One day, the Commission aspires to win for Memphis the title "City of Beautiful Fountains" to place alongside its titles of "The Nation's Cleanest City" and "The City of Beautiful Trees."

Other "top-priority" projects for the future are the beautification of the approach to the Memphis-Arkansas Bridge and Crump Boulevard . . . the beautification of boulevards near and entrances to the Airport . . . the landscaping and planting of parking areas throughout the city . . . trees and planting Downtown, preservation of historic homes.

In conjunction with these projects, the Commission will continue to wage its day-to-day campaign for cleanliness.

During the past 28 years, the City Beautiful Commission has effectively demonstrated that a group of civic-minded women can change a grimy riverfront city into a model of cleanliness. The moral: never underestimate the power of a woman—especially a woman with a broom in her hand!

*"A Clean City is a Beautiful City"*

*Additional information:*

**City Beautiful Commission**

247 Washington Ave. • Memphis, Tenn.