



## City Of Wichita – Previous City Managers

### Lewis William Clapp (October 3, 1919-June 1, 1921)

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Born: Sept 23, 1858

Died: Dec 15, 1934 - Wichita, Kansas

Interred: [Highland Cemetery](#)

L.W. Clapp was another temporary appointed at \$5,000 per annum, who held office for two years from 1919 until 1921. His resignation from the mayoralty and the commission in order to assume the city managership was a violation of the principles of city manager government as set down by the National Municipal League in their model charter. Apparently the intended lack of permanency to this appointment excused it in the minds of the commissioners. Another reason was undoubtedly the growing interest in park development in Wichita; a movement of which Mr. Clapp was the leader. Mr. Clapp resigned from the city managership as soon as his administration had pushed a bill through the legislature permitting the establishment of a park commission. He became president of this board, a position he held until his death in 1934.

Mr. Clapp was a lawyer and a banker and was president of the First Trust Company. Educated at the University of Iowa, he had lived in Wichita since 1886. His civic and professional affiliations were numerous and included the Garden Club, Flying Club, Rotary, Bar Association, the Art Association and the Community Chest.

In October 1934, five hundred citizens gathered at a dinner in his honor at which they paid tribute to his industry and skill in beautifying and building Wichita. The Director of Parks suggested naming the municipal airport for him in 1935 although this has never been done. He was regarded as a fine man by all who knew him. A former commissioner under commission government said that he thought Clapp a "strictly honest, square man." One of his closest associates, the director of parks, Alfred MacDonald regarded Mr. Clapp as a splendid city manager; "a man actuated by motives of doing the best he could for Wichita. He took the appointment because Mr. Ash left suddenly and the whole city manager plan was in jeopardy."

Upon his retirement he left a ninety-eight page report for his successor. Perhaps the greatest achievement of his administration was the acquiring and development, in the face of considerable opposition, of two of Wichita's finest parks, Oak and Sim. Other accomplishments include:

1. Salaries continued to advance until in 1920, wages and salaries in the police department had exactly doubled over those paid in 1917 and in the fire and public service departments, they had very nearly done so.
2. Ordinance revision occurred during 1921 under the direction of an out-of-city lawyer. The ordinances had been last revised in 1912, and the revision at that time had not been satisfactory.
3. The old system of bookkeeping was abandoned and a system approved as especially adapted for municipal work and records was adopted. The new plan proved very satisfactory.
4. The city commission made a singular effort in the Kansas legislature and secured the establishment of a park commission which took over the control of the park department and has been instrumental in the development of an excellent park system.
5. A city planning commission was likewise appointed through legislative permission. Their efforts and successes are noted elsewhere in this report.

In addition to these accomplishments of major importance, Mr. Clapp in his detailed account of the condition

of the city at his retirement did not hesitate to point out the many needs and serious and important questions which confronted the city and the next administrator. One of those in particular was the need for greater enforcement of ordinances relating to garbage, waste, cleanliness, and order.

Upon his retirement, Mr. Clapp stated that he had found this work "the most interesting and absorbing of my business life."

Above text from *City Manager Government in Wichita, Kansas*.

### **Other Interesting Facts**

His home, built in 1887, was the first house constructed in the area known as Clapp Compound. Wichitans refer to his house as Wellington Place. The house is on the Wichita Register of Historic Places (WRHP), Register of Historic Kansas Places (RHKP), National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and located in the Park Place/Fairview NR Historic District.

He was Mayor of Wichita (1917-1919)

Meadowlark Golf Course was renamed L.W. Clapp Golf Course (1956)

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