

## Early Years & Education

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George Edward Kessler was born in Frankenhausen, German on July 16, 1862. His father, Edward Karl Kessler, was the eldest son of a landed family, and was therefore expected to become manager of the estates, a position wholly unsuited to his artistic temperament. To avoid watching the lands fall to ruin under his mismanagement, the family first financed him in an export-import business which failed on account of the speculation of a partner. Then the patient relatives staked him to a new start in the new world, and Edward, his wife Adolphe Clotilde Zeitsche Kessler, daughter Fredericka Antionette Louisa and little George arrived in New York in 1865 at the close of the Civil War. After living briefly in New Jersey, Missouri and Wisconsin, Edward took this family to the wild frontier town of Dallas, Texas, where he and a brother invested in a nearby cotton plantation. Edward died in 1878, possibly of a fever.

Her husband's unhappiness convinced Clotilde that young George, who showed strains of his father's character, should be educated to develop his creative powers, but with a practical element added. To introduce George to the ways of the world she got him a job as a bill collector, an adventuresome occupation for a boy in his middle teens, in a raw town at the end of civilization. Meanwhile Clotilde concluded, in consultation with relatives, that landscape architecture would combine the right degree of creativity and practicality to suit her son's temperament. Through botany he could cultivate his love of the beautiful, while the inflexible formulas of engineering forced discipline upon his mind.

So Clotilde ended George's American schooling and his Dallas bill-collecting, and took him to the quieter precincts of the Grand Ducal gardens at Weimar, where he began private instruction in forestry, botany, and landscape design. George's formal training included:

- Two-year apprenticeship at private landscape gardening school at the Grand Ducal Gardens in Weimar, Germany. Studied botany, forestry, and design under Hofgartner Armin Sckell and Garteninspector Julius Hartwig.
- Working for several months with Haage and Schmidt, a major German plant nursery in Erfurt.
- Studying at Charlottenburg and Potsdam that included brief study at Gaertner Lehr Anstalt, school of garden design founded by Peter Joseph Lenné; technical engineering study at Gartner-Jehranstalt; study with Hofgartner Theodore Neitner at the Neue Garten; and study at Polytechnicum, the premier horticultural library in Germany.
- Completion of civil engineering course at University of Jena.
- Touring with a tutor central and western Europe and southern England for one year study of civic design in major cities from Paris to Moscow.

"Of all of it," he later said, "the travel was of most value."

Sources:

Culbertson, Kurt, (June 2005). [Landscape of the American Renaissance: The Life and Work of George Edward Kessler](#)

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