

The following was discovered by Tom Levin in a classroom storage area at Southeast. It was written in 1967 by Miss Martha Abbott and Miss Anna B. Shouse who were charter members of Southeast High School faculty. The original copy that Tom found is a mimeograph document printed in blue ink.

THE HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST HIGH SCHOOL  
3500 East Meyer Boulevard

In the late 1920's, civic-minded citizens looked upon the 60-acre tract north of Meyer Boulevard between Swope Parkway and Agnes and extending northward to 63<sup>rd</sup> Street as a site for four school buildings – a junior college, a senior high school, a junior high school, and an elementary school. The last mentioned, one wing of which was completed in 1939, is the Pinkerton School.

Later, the Board of Education eliminated the junior college from this location, for they agreed that a more central location would be better if a junior college is ever built. (This acreage was purchased over a period of ten years at a cost of \$247,000.)

Mr. Sutherland, President of the Board of Education, remarked that the board had never acted officially nor had it ever been approached by anyone wishing to purchase the property; but he personally felt that some of the land would be sold for the building of homes.

The following group began the construction of Southeast High School early in 1937:

Messrs. Wight and Wight, architects;  
Mr. Nate Downs, mechanical engineer;  
Messrs. Kaiser and Ducet, general contractors.

The corner stone was laid on June 4, 1937. At this ceremony, talks were made by members of the Board of Education:

Mr. Wallace Sutherland, President;  
Miss Annette Moore, Vice-president;  
Mr. George C. Tinker, Secretary;  
Mr. C. W. Allendorff, Treasurer;  
Mr. Ira S. Gardner; Mr. A. O. Thompson; Mr. Ludwick Graves; Mrs. Frank E. Dorsey; Mr. Louis Oppenstein.

Also participating in the ceremony were Mr. George Melcher, Superintendent; and Mr. John L. Shouse, Assistant Superintendent.

Kansas City's new \$905,000 high school on Meyer Boulevard was inspected, on March 2, 1938, by the members of the Board of Education: Nate Downs, superintendent

of buildings; Fred Cozard, Federal resident engineer; O. D. Lantz, inspector for the Board; and Miss Irene Gentry, acting librarian.

The building is of Gothic architecture with native stone for foundation and Indiana limestone and brick of uneven texture for the upper stories and for the central tower around which the wings of the building are located. The tower rises high above the main structure forming the fourth floor occupied by the cafeteria; and the fifth floor, by the music department. Elevator service is provided to both these floors for students who need it.

From the music room, a door leads to a circular steel stairway which winds an equivalent of two stories to the open observation tower. From here, the view of the city and the wooded hills of Jackson County can be seen for several miles. Among the many trees surrounding Southeast are twenty pin oak trees on the west side of the front lawn. These were planted by the Parent Teachers Association as a living memorial to the Southeast boys who gave their lives in World War II. The school overlooks Swope Park and the attractively landscaped Meyer Boulevard and the D. J. Haff Fountain. Where could a more beautiful location for a Castle of Learning have been found!

Two special features of the new Southeast High School should be mentioned: the public address system and the branch library.

The public address system, the first in any Kansas City school, is located in the outer office. There is a microphone in the outer office and a loud speaker in each classroom. This enables the principal to address the entire school, one room, or a group of rooms. At the end of each period of the day, a mellow tone struck by the clock in the office indicates the close of the period. Bells sound in the halls in unison with the chime signals in the classrooms. Important national and local radio programs, as well as those from the school auditorium, can be tuned into any one or all the rooms.

The branch library located in Southeast High School is the only one in Kansas City with murals on its walls. These paintings were done by WPA artists under the supervision of Mr. Wilber E. Phillips. These portray scenes and characters from stories by Missouri's famous son and writer Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens).

This library was formerly the Mark Twain Branch and located in the Mark Twain grade school. Nearly twelve thousand books and well-selected reference materials are available to students, teachers, and patrons.

The formal opening of Southeast's library was on June 13, 1938, with Miss Sallie Elaine Deatherage, librarian; and Mrs. Mary B. Herbert, assistant (former librarian of Mark Twain branch).

In the spring of 1955, the additions specified in the original plans for Southeast were nearing completion. The west wing, two stories and basement, included eleven more classrooms. The balcony in the auditorium increased the seating capacity by 348 making the total 1432. At the northeast corner from the ground floor including gym balcony on second floor, the third part of the new additions gave Southeast her new and only swimming pool, the boys' dressing room, the girls' dressing room in connection with the new swimming pool, and a drafting room.

Above all this space and on the first floor is the wonderful new gymnasium which brought great joy to Southeast's basketball squads. The new floor is 88' x 47 ½', very close to the ideal size of 84' x 50' for high schools. There are seats on both sides and a balcony in the rear. The seating capacity of the new gymnasium is 1275. The Interscholastic League fans can now expect the Knight basketball squads to be able to drive and to eliminate floor errors that have been the chief handicaps of Southeast teams.

Also, on this floor is the second music room.

What a challenge to the community, to the faculty, to the children from kindergarten through high school was this new building, progressively modern but modestly dignified inside and out.

Everything represented a new beginning – a clean record. It was a thrill to be the first to walk through the halls and into the classrooms.

With pride and enthusiasm the students and faculty became participants in planning and establishing ideals and practices that were to become Southeast's traditions.

Education is not learning to live but living while learning from one's first breath to the last.

For what must each and everyone in Southeast strive? For the mental, moral, physical, and spiritual development of young citizens to serve wherever needed by their home and country.

Southeast High School opened for classes on September 6, 1938. Mr. J. G. Bryan, the first principal, served until he was promoted to the office of Director of Secondary Education in 1940. Mr. Bryan had previously been vice-principal at Southwest and East High Schools. In the term of 1938-1939, he was the only senior high school principal in Kansas City who did not have a vice-principal. This happened because the board of Education did not expect such a large enrollment the first year for the new school.

The first Southeast faculty, thirty-two in number, were selected from the different schools in the city system. They were chosen for their preparation and success in their special fields of service and to fill the needs of this new school. With great interest, enthusiasm, and thoughtful planning, the year began.

Issue one (volume one) of the school paper came out on September 16<sup>th</sup>, the last day of the first full week of school. The fifty students in the newswriting classes did a wonderful job of writing and editing the schools news. The beautiful tower rising high about the center of the Castle of Learning inspired its name "The Tower."

The early issues brought before the student body many problems to be decided. The names Castle and Tower led thoughts to literature.

Here was a student body brave and adventurous as the knights of old. They were pledge [*sic*] to service, to loyalty, and to many who would honor them for those traits.

To be like a knight would be a great adventure, an opportunity to win honor and praise through workmanship and reliability, a chance to portray fine examples of honesty and fair play, and a chance to establish new ideals for the code of honor.

So the Arthurian legends, the stories of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table, became the guide for life in the Castle.

## KING ARTHUR'S KNIGHT

“A Knight there was, and that a worthy man,  
That fro the time he first bigan  
To ryden out, he loved chivelrye,  
Trouthe and honor, freedom and courteisye.”

From The Prologue, The Canterbury Tales –  
Geoffrey Chaucer

By popular vote of the student body the following were gradually chosen to meet new ideals and needs:

## SOUTHEAST MOTTO and CHANT

A brave Southeast Knight loveth chivalry,  
Truth, honor, freedom and fair courtesy.

All students and the athletic teams are known as Knights.

The members of each of the years:

Eighth Grader	Apprentice Page
Freshman	Page
Sophomore	Herald
Junior	Squire
Senior	Knight and Fair Lady
Student-Participating	
Governing Body	Round Table
The Building	The Castle
Auditorium	The Great Hall
Newspaper	Tower
Yearbook	Crusader
Annual Variety Show	Knightlites
School Colors	Scarlet and Royal Blue

## SOUTHEAST FLAG

The Southeast Flag, presented to the school in 1947, by the P. T. A., shows a Knight's helmet on a scarlet and blue field. Seven stars representing the seven elementary schools contributing students to Southeast High School are, also, on the field.

## SOUTHEAST SHIELD

The shield, adopted in 1955, represents high ideals of chivalry for which the school stands. The fleur de lis, a French emblem, depicts chivalry. The flaming daggers stand for the English ideal of courage. The seven stars represent the seven elementary schools from which Southeast students come. The “S” stands for Southeast Castle.

## SENIOR FLAG

The flag of the senior class is flown during the last week the seniors are in school. It is presented to the juniors at the senior assembly. The juniors add their numerals and it becomes the flag of their senior class next year.

## SENIOR SHIELD

The senior class leaves to the school a shield on which are depicted the outstanding accomplishments during their four years in the Castle. These shields are hung in the Great Hall as a constant reminder of previous Southeast Knights.

## THE MAKING OF A KNIGHT

Miss Maria Theresa Feters came to Southeast in September 1941 to have charge of the speech work. After she had become acquainted with the life of the Knights in the Castle, Mr. McMillan, our principal, suggested a pageant following the student from his first day in Southeast to his graduation. So – the Induction ceremony “The Making of a Knight” was written by Miss Feters.

This colorful and impressive program was presented first during Education Week, November 8-12, 1943. It is presented early in the fall to receive officially the new class from the elementary schools. (Written for freshmen, but from 1946 to 1962 the eighth graders composed the entering class.)

The play begins – a Herald welcomes a young boy and girl who express their wish to live in the Castle. They are led to the King and Queen of the Castle seated upon a throne. After listening to their wishes and approving the credentials presented by them, the King introduces the Guildmaster who says: “Our curriculum is built around a life of high ideals and standards. First you assume the duties of a Page. (Apprentice Page, if eight [*sic*] grader; Page, if freshman). You will learn to work with others and explore new fields. The next year you will become Heralds. You will continue to grow in poise and self-development. Then you will become Squires and spend your time in strengthening your mastery of fundamentals. You will then come to the final year – the Knight.”

Merlin, court magician, is called in to take the children on a tour of the required years of work in the Castle. Waving his magic wand, he accomplishes this in a short time with brief comments, tableaux, and wise counseling.

Merlin:

In the making of a Knight much thoughtful attention is given to the enrichment of the spiritual life, for the individual is infinitely precious. A Knight must maintain high standards of noble character.

The Knights gather around their Round Table to discuss the needs that frequently arise in the Castle.

The Scribes must record events both in writing and in pictures to be handed down to those who follow.

Practical training in homemaking is given the Ladies of the Castle; and experience in trade skills is provided for the Knights.

Soldiers, like our cadets, are needed in many places for they appreciate the obligations of citizenship and leadership in peace or in war.

Games and tournaments arouse interest in fair play, team work, good health and physical strength through proper food, exercise, sleep, and a clean mind and body.

Friends to cheer us on are essential to us in whatever we undertake.

The cultural side of life is developed through literature, languages, art, and music. They refine character and develop personality.

There are social activities – happy hours with friends under approved conditions.

Plays, music by the band, orchestra, and vocal groups give relaxation from the routine life.

Everything in the Castle emphasizes the service that each must give to all, and the joy of participation and of achievement gives satisfaction.

Now, the great day has arrived for the Knight who has passed each test required. With firm step and head held high, the Knight moves forward and kneels before the King of the Castle to receive his award.

Five Ladies of the Castle representing Scholarship, Character, Service, Courage, and Loyalty speak in unison: “Four things a man must learn to do if he would make his record true---

Scholarship: To think without confusion clearly

Service: To love his fellow man sincerely

Loyalty: To act from honest motives purely

Character: And trust in God and Heaven securely.”

- Henry Van Dyke

Scholarship: (Holding helmet) You have sought knowledge; you have learned that everyone must educate [sic] himself. Books and teachers are but helpers – the work is yours. Never be satisfied with anything but your best. This helmet is the symbol of knowledge – remember you are learning for life. (Places helmet on Knight’s head)

Character: Through the centuries, a Knight has been courteous, fair, and respectful. These traits make up character. Live by this maxim, “Act as if the person for whom you have the highest regard were looking on.” Wear this cloak which symbolizes to all the world the person you are. Remember you represent Southeast and your actions contribute to the school’s reputation.

Service: How better could a Knight show his love and devotion than through service rendered in his Castle? Your duties will increase, you can become a leader because of your ability and your willingness to serve – a leader with his head in the clouds but his feet on the ground. (Gives Knight the shield, symbol of service.)

Courage: Fearless Knight, courage is a noble virtue. Through participation in activities, you have developed courage with a spirit of daring. You have developed independence, and ability to think, to choose, and to act for yourself according to what seems right, fair, and wise. A Knight is brave. Take these spurs, wear them proudly as a mark of your achievements.

Loyalty: A good Knight is loyal, faithful, and honorable. You have obeyed the rules, performed your duties, supported all enterprises in the Castle. You have been loyal to your parents, your King of the Castle. Accept this sword.

Ladies (in unison): This young Squire has achieved his crowning glory. He has proclaimed to all the world his love and devotion to chivalry, truth and honor, freedom and courtesy.

King to Knight: Lay your hand in mine and swear to reverence your conscience as if it were your King. Uphold Christ, redress human wrong, speak no slander; no, nor listen to it. Honor your own word as if it were your God’s, and lead a sweet life in purest chastity.

From Dedication and Guinevere  
Tennyson’s Idylls of the King

Knight: I will follow the Christ, live pure, speak truth, right wrong, and follow the King.

King: In the name of Southeast, I dub you Knight. Be loyal, brave, and true.

Boy and Girl: We are ready to be sworn in as workers in your court. (They kneel before the King and Queen and say the pledge)

United we stand for the school that we love,  
Knights strong and fearless, hold truth high above,  
Pledging allegiance to the scarlet and blue,  
Will guard they honor and always be true.

King: The entire class will rise and repeat the pledge.

King: (After pledge) I welcome all of you as students of the Castle of Southeast. All members of the new class will stand and sing to your school.

Knights and maidens lay before thee  
Flowers of praise to crown  
All thy works of dear devotion.  
Honor and renown.  
Dear old Southeast, how we love thee  
We will e'er be true  
To our colors high above thee  
Scarlet and royal blue.

- Franklin S. Lamar

#### KNIGHT'S TROPHY

The Knight's Memorial Trophy was presented to Southeast in 1947 by Mr. and Mrs. H. P. Wilhelmson in honor of the twenty Knights who gave their lives in World War II. The trophy was purchased with money saved by their son Hank Wilhelmson, one of the Gold Star Knights.

Each year the trophy is engraved with the names of the senior boy receiving the Knight's Award and the senior girl receiving the Ladyship Award.

Recipients of these awards must be outstanding students who have distinguished themselves in scholarship, citizenship, leadership, sportsmanship, and service. Each winner is presented a certificate of this achievement.

#### THE PRINCIPALS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS OF SOUTHEAST

Since the school opened in 1938, it has had only two principals. Mr. Joseph G. Bryan, first principal, came to Southeast with two years' experience as vice-principal at East High School following eleven years in that capacity at Southwest. In the fall of 1940, he was made Director of Secondary Education for the Kansas City Public Schools; and on November 11, 1940, he was succeeded by Mr. Harry McMillan, formerly principal of Meservey Elementary School and vice-principal of East High School. He had previously served as principal in Pleasant Hill, Missouri, and as Superintendent in Peculiar and Lee's Summit, Missouri. He coached basketball in several of these positions and has been an instructor in the summer sessions of both Central Missouri State College at Warrensburg and University of Kansas City.

Though Southeast opened without a vice-principal, the first one, Mr. George Peterson, formerly a teacher at Manual High School, taught history at Southeast the first



year he was appointed to this new position in 1939. He served only two years, being transferred in 1942 to Southwest in the same capacity.

He was followed by Mr. George R. Powell, also a vice-principal at Southwest. He had taught mathematics and science at Westport and at Country Day School before his appointment to Southwest.

When enrollment increased in 1964, a second vice-principal was appointed, Mr. H. Berle Adams, who had served as mathematics instructor and basketball coach, and for the previous two years as assistant to the principal.

Four of our administrators have served the United States in the armed forces: Mr. Bryan in the Marines; Mr. McMillan and Mr. Powell in the S. A. T. C., a division of the Infantry; and Mr. Adams in the Air Force, where he is presently a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force Reserves.

Compiled by  
Miss Martha Abbott and Miss Anna B. Shouse  
(Charter Members of Southeast High School Faculty)  
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