

A History of Hale H. Cook School **By Hester Turner**

The Hale H. Cook School is located at 73rd and Pennsylvania in the area once known as Westmoreland. Its beginning dates back to the year 1912. The site on which the school stands was purchased in August of that year. In October, the first double annex was completed and school was begun immediately with an enrollment of about five children.

The majority of these children came from what was known as the Waldo School which up to that time had been conducted in a small church not far from the present school site. The first two teachers were Miss Gertrude Hamilton, who taught the first, second and third grades and Miss Elizabeth Wark who had charge of the upper grades and also served as principal.

The growth of the Hale H. Cook School had been neither phenomenal nor discouraging. Not until 1916 was the Board of Education obliged to provide another building and third teacher. In 1917, it became necessary to add a fourth teacher. By the year 1923, more space was needed, and excavation was started on the quarter-million-dollar building by contactors G. Ims Brothers. It was constructed of brick and cut stone, and it contained ten classrooms, an auditorium that would seat six hundred people, a gymnasium, a cafeteria, a domestic science room, and a manual training room. The two entrances on 73rd Street and Pennsylvania Avenue were used by the boys and girls separately.

Several classrooms were added to the school in the 1930's. In the early 1950's, the enrollment grew to more than seven hundred pupils, and two mobile rooms were needed. By the 1970's, the enrollment had dropped to around three hundred pupils.

The School was named for Hale H. Cook who was born in Michigan in 1857. He came to Kansas City in 1890 where, for many years, he was a member of the Board of Education from 1905 until his resignation in 1917. At that time, he was president, having served as vice president and on every committee through which the Board of Education administers much of its detailed work.

Much has changed since Hale Cook became the foundation of South Kansas City. Despite the many changes that have taken place in the area over the seven decades, the appearance of Cook really hasn't changed. The exterior of the building has maintained the classic design of the original 1923 architects.

From 1976 until 1985, the school was run under traditional elementary standards. In 1986, Cook became a science/math investigative learning magnet school along with Hartman and Marlborough. Together they make up the district's Southwest Cluster Elementary Schools. The transition from traditional standards was due to the desegregation order issued by Judge Clark in 1985 in an effort to provide an equal and quality education for all children in the Kansas City, Missouri School District.