

The History of South Junior High

By Mrs. Nell Prince



(Reprinted from the *Cowan Bell*, Vol. II, Special Edition, pages 34, 35; May 24, 1975.)

In 1964 the Franklin County Board of Education, being interested in the growth and development of boys and girls of junior high age, set up committees to work on many important phases of organizing, building and operating two junior high schools in the county. It was recommended that the Building Committee depart from the traditional style of building and use the new and modern exploratory type of building. The Coordinating Committee recommended that these junior high schools be organized to meet all requirements for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

By 1968 funds were provided by Franklin County Quarterly Court to start construction of two junior high schools.

Thirty acres of land on U.S. 64 – 41A were purchased as a beautiful site for South Junior High School. The modern plant consists of 69,703 sq. ft. with twenty-eight stations.

A Library and Commons Area were designed in such a way as to offer a more functional program. The library was placed on the south side with cafeteria, offices, kitchen, industrial arts and gymnasium on the north side. The gym was added about one year after the main building was completed. It contains 21,788 sq. ft. with a seating capacity of 2500. Since it has a stage, it serves as an auditorium also.

Classes were moved into the new plant in November, 1968. Twenty-five full time and five part time faculty members worked with Mr. James E. Douglas, the first principle. Mr. Robert Osteen was elected for the second term to succeed Mr. Douglas, who was transferred to East High School, Tullahoma in 1974. Mr. Fred Holmes was named principal. Mr. Holmes has been an educator in the Franklin County Schools for a number of years, and was principal of Cowan Elementary from 1970 – 73. Twelve of the original faculty members are still on staff during this 1974 – 75 term.

The athletic teams were given the name “Trojans”; the Trojan head was chosen as the school symbol and the motto chosen was “Truth and Honor”. The school colors were Kelly green and old gold.

South Junior High School’s adventure requires that students develop the ability to handle freedom under teacher supervision. The many honors that have been brought to the school by the students are evidence that this objective is being achieved. Our athletic teams have had many successful seasons and our Band has won many awards in competition throughout our short history. There is proof of this in the trophy case. Our students have placed in the Regional Science Fair and Annual Math Contest. The Beta Club currently has a membership of 92.

South Junior High has 33 faculty members. The student enrollment is approximately 670. These students reside in Cowan, Sewanee, Sherwood, Winchester, Broadview, Belvidere and Keith Springs Communities. Most of the parents are permanently settled in these areas and this reveals the stability of our students – eighty seven percent attending South for 3 years.

Our goal as professional educators is to produce well-adjusted, physically fit, and intellectually curious individuals prepared to make wise choices concerning their future so that they can assume meaningful roles in society.

It is also our conviction that the school and community must work together to produce more effective members of a democratic society.

Additional Notes:

In August, 1983, Cowan Elementary School (grades K-6) vacated the original Public School building and relocated to South Junior High. The old Public School, built in 1922, was subsequently demolished and replaced by a new one-story facility in the same general footprint. The Elementary School relocated from South to the new facility in January, 1985.

In the Year 2005 the Franklin County School system moved the 9th grade classes out of the two junior high schools (North and South) and into the newly constructed Franklin County High School. The very next year all sixth grade classes were moved from Clark Memorial, Cowan, Decherd, North Lake, and Rock Creek Elementary Schools into the junior high schools. South Junior High was thence renamed South Middle School.

The round-style structures at South (and also at North in Decherd) proved costly to maintain as they needed frequent roof work to stop and prevent water leaks. In 2018 the Franklin County School Board and the Franklin County Commission reached an agreement to demolish and replace South Middle School and North Middle School with new facilities. South is scheduled to be demolished and the school relocated to the new structure in 2020.

L. Jarod Pearson