

Penn Elementary School Closing Program Collection (SC218)

Introduction

This collection contains items pertaining to the last program of the Penn Elementary School before closing its doors in 1955.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Penn Elementary School
Title: Penn Elementary School Closing Program Collection
Dates: May 1955
Size: 0.02 linear feet, 2 folders
Collection Number: SC218

Donor Information

Found in collection.

Citation Note

Penn Elementary School Closing Program Collection (SC218), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Administrative Information

Related Collections: Additional information on Penn Elementary School may be found in the vertical file Schools-Public-Kansas City, Missouri-Penn.

Historical Sketch

Penn School was the first school established west of the Mississippi River to educate African American children. In 1868, Mrs. Sam Ellis rented a building on Pennsylvania between Archibald and Westport roads as a school, naming it after the English Quaker and founder of the state of Pennsylvania, William Penn. The school moved several times, first to a frame building on Archibald, then to 43rd and Roanoke, and finally to 4237 Pennsylvania in 1873. This building also served as the Baptist church during this time.

In May 1899, the Westport School District, which Penn School was a part of, was annexed by the Kansas City, Missouri School District. After the ruling of Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka mandating integrated schools, the school closed in 1955. The final program held at the school, titled "The Final Roundup," was attended by 250 current and former students, teachers, principals, and others.

Shortly after closing, the school district decided to put the building up for sale. The Westport Historical Society tried to save the building as an historical landmark, but was unable to do so. The building burned down in February 1967. A memorial to the school was dedicated in June 1992, on J. C. Nichols Parkway across from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Scope and Content Note

The collection contains correspondence from invited guests related to attending the school's final program, the program brochure, and additional ephemerae. The collection includes the program's guest book.

Series 1: Guest book, May 26, 1955

This series contains the school's final program guest book with names and addresses.

Series 2: Correspondence, May 1955

Materials in this series include various correspondence about the final program from former students, such as Reverend H. Mansfield Collins, and school district officials, such as Kansas City, Missouri School Superintendent Mark W. Bills.

Series 3: Ephemera, May 1955

This series contains the school's closing program brochure, cover art, and napkin from the event.

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Guest book, May 26, 1955

f. 1 Guest book, May 26, 1955

Series 2: Correspondence, May 1955

f. 2 Correspondence, May 1955

Series 3: Ephemera, May 1955

f. 3 Brochure, cover art, and napkin, May 1955

Processed by Sheri Volpe, Intern, October 2014