



Courier-Journal Photos

Probably the finest school for Negroes in the South is the new Central High School at Chestnut and 12th Streets, shown here from the air. The building cost more than \$3,000,000. It can accommodate 1,800 pupils without strain.

## 40 Years At Central

# School Bell Spurs A Yen To Return

By CHARLES WHALEY

It will be hard this year for Atwood S. Wilson to stifle that back-to-school feeling he always gets when September rolls around.

After 40 years at Louisville's Central High School—29 of them as principal—Wilson will retire this month at 69.

Retirement won't dim Wilson's zest for education. He plans to write educational articles, work on a book tentatively titled "The Needs of Education," and help with educational projects for senior-citizen clubs in churches and at Plymouth Settlement House.

### 'I Can't Stay Away'

"And maybe I will go back now and then to Central as a substitute teacher," Wilson said. "I can't stay away."

His last year at Central was spent as a counselor. Previously he had spent 10 years there teaching chemistry. Wilson himself requested the change from principal to counselor.

He was succeeded as principal by J. Waymon Hackett.

Wilson, a Louisville native, saw Central through its greatest growth period. The school's 1934 enrollment was about 750 compared with today's approximately 1,600, he said.

About 15 percent of the graduates went on to college in 1934. Now that percentage has doubled, he said.

Wilson was principal when Central made its big move in 1952 from its old building at Eighth and Chestnut to a new structure at 1130 W. Chestnut. The new school cost about \$4 million, including equipment.

"That brought about one of the biggest changes," Wilson said. "In the old days Central had a purely academic or college-preparatory program. Now we have a comprehensive school and can train people along all lines—both academic and vocational.

### 82 Units Offered

"We offer 82 units—more courses, more offerings than any other high school in Kentucky," he said.

Wilson is also proud of the 75 college scholarships he helped get for Central graduates in 1963. He thinks that also is a record for a City high school.

In his book-in-progress (he is the coauthor of another one called "Group Guidance In The Senior High Schools"), Wilson will define education's

major needs today as more emphasis on character building for students, more guidance counselors, dropout prevention, stress on fundamental subjects, and more parent-teacher groups.

He disagrees with State Board of Education members who have suggested withholding State aid from schools that have neither an integrated faculty nor student body. This is currently the case at Central, which has had only one white graduate.

### 'They Come Naturally'

"I don't think any of these things need to be written into laws," Wilson said. "I think they will come about naturally."

"Everybody (under the school system's liberal transfer policy) has a right to go to Central if he wants to and any teacher can teach there if he wants to. A white teacher was going to teach there about two years ago, but then she went into the Peace Corps.

"This is not a problem. White children will be in there gradually. The City of Louisville has an integrated school system. . . . The fact that you have a school in a neighborhood that's all colored doesn't mean you don't have good teachers."

Atwood and his wife, Eunice, a mathematics teacher at Western Junior High School, live at 1925 W. Madison. For 32 summers he has taken education and psychology courses at the University of Chicago and the University of Colorado. His wife accompanied him and studied, too, for 20 summers.

Wilson has five daughters, who like him are graduates of Central and have become teachers.

### He's Fisk Graduate

They are Mrs. Anita Giles, Perry School; Mrs. Sylvia Corbett, John F. Kennedy School; Mrs. Susie Mae Guess, Brandeis; Mrs. James Jackson, wife of a United States Army colonel stationed in London, England, where she teaches in



Staff Photo

MR. AND MRS. ATWOOD S. WILSON

the 10th Armed Forces School, and Mrs. Lucille Dreher, who plans to resume teaching when her children are older. The Wilsons have 10 grandchildren.

He is a graduate of Fisk University and holds a bachelor's degree with a major in chemistry and a master's degree in education from the University of Chicago. He served six years as principal of Madison Street Junior High School, now named Russell Junior High.

Among his numerous honors and activities have been these:

First Negro trustee of the Louisville Free Public Library (in 1948 he presented the resolution that abolished racial segregation in the Main Library at Fourth and York); secretary-treasurer 20 years of the old Kentucky Negro Education Association, which later merged with the Kentucky Education Association; winner of the Lincoln Key for contributions to the education of the Negro in Kentucky; evening-school and summer-school faculty member at the old Louisville Municipal College; visiting summer lecturer at Kentucky State College.

He was among the first three Negroes in the country to receive, in 1933, a Silver Beaver award from President Herbert Hoover, then honorary president of the Boy Scouts of America; a member of the executive committee for Kentucky of the National Youth Administration; only Negro member in 1944 of the advisory

board to then Mayor Joseph Scholtz; recipient of a doctor-of-humanities degree in 1954 from Simmons University here; president more than 20 years of Plymouth Settlement House, and trustee and superintendent of the Sunday school of Plymouth Congregational Church.