

Comments for the House Federal and State Affairs Committee
Opposing House Bill No.2208

In 1825 the government of the United States defined a reservation for the Shawnee west of Missouri on land that had been part of the lands of the Kansa. Between 1827 and 1833 the Shawnee moved to this new area – 2/3 from their Missouri lands and 1/3 from Ohio reservations. In 1830 some of the leaders of the Shawnee requested, through the government agent, a Methodist school and mission. By December of that year Rev. Johnson had arrived and had the day school open in March 1831. By the mid 1830's the success of the manual training program had more students attending than they had space for. Therefore, in the fall of 1839 the Fairway site opened as a boarding school and over the next 15 years had students from 22 different tribes. The Kansas -Nebraska Act of 1854 brought an end to the reservation and the Indian Manual Labor School (aka. Shawnee Indian Mission).

While the 12 acres that are the historical site and the 3 major buildings that remain are a base for understanding the efforts of the school and mission they only represent a 15 year segment of the history of this site. Without these buildings 3-4 dozen houses would occupy the site today. A complete history can only be understood by a study of the centuries before the arrival of the Shawnee and of the period since 1854 – a continuing school till 1862, Bleeding Kansas - Ad Astra Per Aspera - from Territory to Statehood, Civil War, and since 1867 the years of private ownership and its role in the growth of Johnson County. This last part should include the development of the full 2000 acres of the original Mission. Then the work of the State of Kansas since 1927 to maintain the site and promote an understanding of its history and significance.

Therefore, any proposal to shift ownership and control of the Shawnee Indian Mission – A State Historical Site to a group that had a limited presence for a limited time can not be in the best interest of the public and those committed to a full, and evolving, understanding of its history.

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