

01/20/2024

To: Members of the Kansas Federal and State Affairs Committee

Re: House Bill 2208

I am writing to you as a resident of Johnson County Kansas and a citizen of the State of Kansas.

This is in reference to the hearing regarding the conveyance of ownership of the Shawnee Mission site in Fairway, Kansas to the Shawnee Tribe of Miami, Oklahoma House Bill 2208. I am in opposition to this bill as the Mission belongs to the people of Kansas not the Shawnee tribe of Oklahoma.

The citizens of Kansas have financially supported this site for 97 years since obtaining ownership in 1927. As a Johnson County resident, I value the site and wish for the ownership to remain with the Kansas Historical Society. It is the ONLY historical site that exists within Johnson County Kansas and one of the few undeveloped sites left in Northern Johnson County. It is a refuge from development and needs to remain such.

The land in question was originally inhabited by the Kaw Indian tribe historically noted from the 1500's. The site served as a manual training school from 1839-1862 (23 years) for twenty-two different local Indian tribes. The tribes paid a tuition fee for each child attending the school. The Mission served as a wayfaring stop on the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails. The site played a significant role in the Civil War serving as an outpost and hospital for Union soldiers. It also served as the first capital of the state of Kansas. Local history regarding the early dairy farming industry in northern Johnson County is well documented. The site was privately owned by early prominent Johnson County residents before being purchased by eminent domain by the Kansas Historical Society in 1927. This site has a long and colorful history involving a wide variety of uses by diverse groups of people.

In 1854 the Shawnee Tribes entered a treaty with the United States government under which the Shawnee tribes agreed to the sale of land and the Mission site in exchange for monetary compensation as well as a generous land allotment for each Shawnee family member. Allowing the Oklahoma Shawnee tribe ownership of the Mission when their ancestors and those of the other two Shawnee tribes were compensated in 1854 does not seem appropriate to me.

This is not the first attempt by a Shawnee tribe to gain ownership of this site. In 1988 the Supreme Court of the United States ruled the Absentee tribe of Oklahoma (there are three separate and unique Shawnee tribes) had no valid claim to the site and denied their petition to gain ownership. This ruling and case should be considered as it sets precedence for any ownership claim by any of the Shawnee tribes.

As a citizen of Kansas and a Mission supporter I would ask that the committee deny passage of House Bill 2208. By retaining ownership, the Historical Society plays an impartial role and ensures that **all** parties who contributed to the history of the Mission and its' land will be duly represented. The Kansas Historical Society was created in 1875 to support and promote Kansas History. Who is better to serve as Mission site owner than this entity?

Thank you for your consideration.

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