

In 1927, when the Kansas Supreme Court upheld the State of Kansas' use of eminent domain to take ownership of the Shawnee Indian Mission and prevented its destruction to make way for new developments, their opinion spoke specifically about government's responsibility to preserve our history and that understanding our factual history is essential to fostering good citizenship (i.e. knowing about prior generations and their struggles makes us better people).

This is one of the oldest places in Kansas. It was situated on the Santa Fe, Oregon and California trails just west of what became the most popular departure point for settlers who might stop to buy grain, flour, clothing and dried fruit for their trip in addition to blacksmith services. It was the site of the Bogus Legislature and was used as a field hospital during the Civil War.

The physical preservation of the site is of paramount importance and I have devoted the last 18 years of my life to that cause. However, I believe the City of Fairway has correctly highlighted the scary future possibilities if ownership were to be transferred and I will address other concerns.

As importantly as the physical preservation of the site, I believe our mutual and rich history of what actually happened here is in danger. I believe that if ownership is transferred to the Shawnee, its history will almost certainly be misrepresented. I believe it has already consistently been publicly misrepresented by the leader of the Loyal Shawnee since he became involved here at Fairway's invitation.

It is easily arguable that his allegations about what happened at the site are not historically accurate and don't bode well for a site completely under his control especially since he believes that it was a place where evil was perpetrated against his people.

Many of his most horrific allegations are historically and factually correct for the boarding schools of the 1870s and while the treatment of Native Americans by what became a dominant white society can't be the source of pride and must be acknowledged, this was a different period in history. This school that opened in 1839 existed in a different historical period and was subject to the beliefs and morals of the time. Its history shouldn't be misrepresented to fit a narrative.

When the Shawnee moved to Kansas Indian Territory, they were accompanied by missionaries like Isaac McCoy who encouraged them to move because he and many others thought it was a last chance for them to live traditional tribal lives. McCoy had lived as a missionary among the Shawnee for 30 years starting as a young newly married minister and raising his family among them. In his book "History of Baptist Indian Missions," first printed in 1840, his regard and respect for the people he ministered to is clear.

In addition, the federal government gave each parent a voucher for their child's/children's education and they were free to spend it at any of the many, many mission schools that were established in the territory. The "Annals of Shawnee Methodist Mission" (1939, Kansas Historical Society) uses primary sources from the time. It reports that missionaries rode the Territory basically as travelling salesmen for the schools established by their denomination. It reports that McCoy and other Baptists were very surprised that some of the people they had ministered to for many years chose the Shawnee Methodist Mission for their children.

They chose to spend their vouchers at the Shawnee Methodist Mission and apparently one of the reasons they did was because it was the only mission that offered manual trades training as part of its curriculum. Contrary to the allegations of "forced labor" made by Chief Barnes, the Shawnee parents of the time obviously thought it was added value not servitude. Work was part of everyone's life from early ages in both white and Native American communities on the frontier.

The fact that their children were not forced to become Christians/Methodists might also have an inducement. This was definitely not the case in the boarding schools later in the century.

The ground imaging that was done in an attempt to prove Chief Barnes' allegations that children were killed or neglected to death and buried randomly among the remaining 12 acres were fruitless for many reasons. For one, many parents lived close enough for children to return home during school breaks (i. e. Monticello, Shawnee, Olathe, Lenexa). They would have been aware of abuse and the body of a child who died would almost certainly have been returned to them if for no other reason than it would be bad business in a situation in which you were competing for pupils.

The tribe recently regained ownership of the Shawnee Cemetery in downtown Shawnee just east of Nieman Road (i.e. easy travelling distance from the Shawnee Methodist Mission). Obviously there were cemeteries in other settlements and undoubtedly there was one in some place on the 2000 original acres that constituted the Mission's farmland for those who died without nearby relatives. Obviously, if one existed, it was not preserved by those building houses in Fairway and we will never know.

Chief Barnes has also used the existence of bed bugs and cholera outbreaks as additional proof of the children's mistreatment. Bed bugs and cholera were facts of life during the period the school was open. Almost everyone in the west had bed bugs and a place visited by fur trappers, traders and other travelers coming east would almost certainly have been infested and every person who lived and slept there would be infested. While that included the children, it also included teachers and the Reverend and Mrs. Johnson.

Cholera epidemics were also a fact of life and many, many white settlers died during outbreaks.

Other history also is at odds with the malice Chief Barnes attributes to those at the school. Accounts from the time describe Mrs. Johnson's mother visiting Shawnee encampments when she visited her daughter here and speaking Shawnee to tribe members. She had been a hostage of the Shawnee in her youth and apparently had warm feelings for them.

The Mission closed in 1862 after the start of the Civil War and the years leading to its closing had been difficult and affected the Mission. Many Native American families, like white families, were divided by the war and slavery. The Loyal Shawnee are called "Loyal" because they supported the Union. Others did not and left for

Fairway has invited representatives of the 23 tribes (including the Loyal Shawnee) represented by pupils at the Mission to help craft a more accurate representation of the Native American experience here. I applaud and encourage them and the Kansas Historical Society to pursue this goal and I respectfully request that you do not transfer ownership of the site from the State of Kansas.

Thank you.

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