

Educational Testimony for HB 2208

My name is Martha Wofford, I reside at 7606 Oakview Lane, Lenexa, KS 66216. I am a retired Kansas school teacher, and I have been volunteering at the Shawnee Indian Mission since 2000.

Until 2000, I had never been to the Mission, nor did I know anything about the history of this very integral part of our community. Since that time, I have had the great fortune of spending quite a bit of time volunteering at this Mission.

Over a decade ago, the site director at the time, Anita Faddis, and I worked diligently developing a curriculum that aligned with the state social studies' objectives for fourth graders. Westward Expansion is a focus, and the Mission had all three major trails run through this land. The Santa Fe, the Oregon and California Trails were all of great national importance in the westward expansion movement. The crossing of all three trails does not occur outside of the Kansas City area, but it does on the Mission land.

As part of the curriculum, I personally visit all 4th grade schools that come on the Trails Through the Mission field trip. On these school visits, I talk about why we have a Mission and that it was due to the Indian Removal Act. The government gave the Shawnee tribe 1.6 million acres in the Great American Desert (Kansas), and \$26,000 to move the tribe from Ohio to Kansas. As ironic as it may be, the land already was part of the Kanza or Kaw tribe. Chief Blackfish, a chief in Missouri, requested a Mission be established. There were 3 religious organizations that wanted to be considered: the Quakers, Baptists and Methodists. The first two religious groups lived among the tribe, and the third, the Methodists built schools for the children to attend. This school was voluntary and was not a 12 month school. The Methodists were given 2,000 acres to establish this school. I leave a trunk of replicas of "tools" from the 1850s and as they tour the site, they find them and learn their importance.

I am going to give you a synopsis of what a day looks like when children come on this educational journey. The children come in family units decided by their teachers, and they have already decided what they want to take on their wagon train. They pack their wagons and as we travel, they learn their fate, which depends on what they have chosen to bring on this big trip west, as well as acts of

fate that happened to travelers as they made this treacherous journey. One half of the children go on the wagon train and the other half go through learning rotations. This takes over 2 hours, then they have lunch, and afterwards they are part of rotations that depict life in the 1850's and the morning children do the wagon train.

The rotations are based on the life of people in the 1850s and what was available at the Mission. We had a bakery, so the children visit a cabin, learn about the hardships of living at that time, make butter, and eat honey on biscuits. A wonderful man teaches children how to play marbles (a game the boys would have brought on the trip) and they each get a marble. We had beehives, and we teach the children about the importance of bees, and how they are cared for and honey is harvested. We have a store, which actually was on the site, with replicas of necessary items in the 1850's. We have fiber and clothing because these were skills the girls were taught, and the children try on the many layers worn in the 1850s. The last rotation changes depending on availability. We have in the past had a native American flute player and storyteller and last year we had a member of the Wyandotte tribe show her family's cultural items and share how they arrived in the area.

This is one project, 4 days, with over 350 children attending and it is a memorable hands-on experience for children who have never been to the Mission. There are many more educational activities that take place here-this is only one such event.

Not many places in our state are National Historic Landmarks and a Kansas State Historical Site. The state of Kansas owns this site, and as a resident I think it is important to keep the Shawnee Indian Mission as a state asset. If we convey this land to the Shawnee Tribe, we will potentially lose all or a part of Kansas history and public ownership that allows all peoples to learn, visit and enjoy this gem from our past...arguably the most historic site in our state.