Restoration of the North Building at Shawnee Methodist Mission

The Kansas legislature of 1939 appropriated $15,000 for the restoration of the North building of Shawnee Methodist Mission and Indian Manual Labor School. The work was completed last spring and the fifteen rooms, furnished as of 1845-1850, were formally opened to the public June 14, 1942.

The Rev. Jerome C. Berryman was in charge of the mission and school when the building was erected in 1845. It was used as a dormitory and school where Indian girls were taught spinning, weaving and other domestic arts, and as the residence of Thomas Johnson, the founder and long-time superintendent, and other teachers. Andrew H. Reeder, first territorial governor of Kansas, later had his executive offices there.

Little care was given the building after the school was closed in 1862. By 1927, when the state acquired the property, rooms at the east end of the building, which originally corresponded with those at the west, had been razed and the remainder was in a dilapidated condition. Under the direction of Roy Stookey, state architect, and Charles Marshall, his assistant, the building was rebuilt. The west end was torn out and replaced brick by brick after a concrete footing had been placed under the foundation. The two-story porch on the south was almost entirely rebuilt. Throughout, all original floors, mantels and laths, hand-made of native timber, were retained as far as possible. Walnut doors, pegged, not nailed, came to light when thick coatings of paint and varnish were removed.

George Dovel, a graduate of the Kansas City Art Institute, supervised the interior decorating and furnishing. In a search that carried him over much of eastern Kansas and western Missouri he secured the furnishings needed to make the restoration authentic. The furniture is genuinely antique, except a few desks and beds for Indian students which were built by the museum project of the WPA from 1845 models. All the wallpapers also are reproductions of designs of the period.

The North building was erected after the other two were in operation. The West building, now used by the caretaker, was started in 1839. The East building, now a museum, was begun in 1841. All have been partly or fully restored since the state acquired the property.
Shawnee mission was first established by the Rev. Thomas Johnson in 1830 near Chouteau's old trading post, not far from present Turner, Wyandotte county. In 1839, Johnson began building on the present site in northeast Johnson county, and the school became an establishment of two thousand acres, containing the three large buildings and thirteen smaller ones, with an enrollment of nearly two hundred Indian boys and girls.

For years the school was an outpost of civilization on the Western frontier. The Santa Fe and Oregon trails passed near its doors. Many of the great figures of the old West were entertained there. The first governor of the territory of Kansas established his office in the North building in 1854. The legislature of 1855 convened in the East building to pass the first territorial laws. For a time the institution was headquarters for the Proslavery party and was the scene of many conflicts. During the Civil War the buildings were barracks for Union troops and in 1864 a battle was fought across the mission fields.

Old Shawnee Mission is managed by the Kansas State Historical Society. Coöperating with the society are the Colonial Dames, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Daughters of 1812, the Daughters of the American Colonists and the Shawnee Mission Indian Historical Society.

Pictures of the North building and a number of the restored rooms appear on the following pages.
THE NORTH BUILDING AT OLD SHAWNEE METHODIST MISSION

Built in 1845 and restored in 1942
THOMAS JOHNSON LIVING ROOM

The wallpaper is a reproduction of an American Empire pattern. The rosewood armchair and walnut settee are early Victorian. The armchair was used aboard a Boston clipper ship by the original owner who later brought it west in a covered wagon. The secretary is walnut Victorian. The clock is a Seth Thomas.
PRIVATE DINING ROOM OF THE JOHNSON FAMILY—The chair is a good example of the Hitchcock type, with original stenciling. There is a candle mould in the window.

TEACHER'S BEDROOM—The walnut bed is covered with a hand-woven spread of the period. The center design is Washington on horseback. The chair in the corner is a Shaker rocker.
BEDROOM FOR JOHNSON CHILDREN—The bed, table and washstand are walnut. Rugs are reproductions.

BEDROOMS FOR TEACHERS AND TEACHER'S CHILDREN (Below)—Rugs are reproductions. The bureau is late American Empire.
DORMITORY FOR INDIAN GIRLS.—The beds are reproductions. The two quilts are old; the coverlets are reproductions.

LOOM ROOM.—The rug loom was made by an early settler and has never left Johnson county. A yarn reel stands at the right of the loom. The large spinning wheel is for wool.
TEACHER'S BEDROOM—The rope bed came from Pennsylvania. The trunk belonged to the Rev. Jesse Greene, one of the founders of the school.

JOHNSON BEDROOM—The bed is maple, cherry and walnut, about 1835-1850, and the chest is walnut. The rugs are reproductions.
BEDROOM FOR TEACHER WITH FAMILY—The bed is cherry and was made between 1850 and 1850. The walnut dressing, about 1840, has the top drawer fitted as a writing desk. The pan at right of fireplace held live coals and was used for warming beds. The walnut wardrobe is a good example.

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE JOHNSON BEDROOM—The door is of walnut held together by wooden pegs. The maple bureaus and the mirror over the cherry washstand are American Empire. The washbowl and pitcher are Bristol glass.
CLASS ROOM FOR INDIAN GIRLS—The desks are reproductions. The teacher's desk is an original, of hickory and pine, with wooden pegs instead of nails.