

The Old Shawnee Mission

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This item, written by William Elsey Connelley of the Kansas State Historical Society, provides a detailed history of the Old Shawnee Mission up until the early twentieth century. Connelley's history of the Mission covers the many events which placed European and European Americans in control of the land where the Mission was eventually built, as well as the many evolutions of the Old Shawnee Mission itself.

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Date: January 01, 1900-January 01, 1920

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KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 219360

Item Identifier: 219360

www.kansasmemory.org/item/219360

KANSAS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

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several years after this general law was enacted, efforts were made to secure an appropriation from the State for this purpose. The Shawnee Mission Association, the Kansas State Historical Society, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and other patriotic organizations and persons, worked earnestly to accomplish this end. Although apparently defeated each session, sentiment was slowly growing for the preservation of the Old Mission by the State, and it only needed the vigorous campaign of the Society of Colonial Dames of Kansas, begun immediately following the election of 1926 and enthusiastically prosecuted through the entire session of 1927, to secure the endorsement and assistance of other patriotic societies of the State and bring final victory for the cause. And on the last night of the 1927 session of the Kansas Legislature, \$48,230 was appropriated for the purchase of the property, damages and court costs in acquiring it.

The purpose of this move on the part of the State of Kansas is the construction of a Memorial Park on this site. It is the plan to repair and restore the buildings and to surround them with a lovely setting of garden and woodland. And then to open them, under the proper guardianship, to the people of Kansas, and of the Nation at large. To give the historic Old Mission, with its atmosphere of the great Kansas Epic in which it played so large a part, to all men for all time to come.

And this is as it should be. For patriotism is a fire that must be constantly and carefully tended by the generations of a country, lest it die. To be a good patriot to a whole

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country, it is necessary that the citizen of it should love and hold in deepest veneration some particular locality in that country.

The child whose early life is surrounded by the tangible evidences of the history and great deeds of his country grows into the man who is rooted in that country. As he grows, the visible memorial of his country—men who have lived and conquered life is an answer to that eternal query of youth; "Why should I try to do---to achieve?" As a man, the memories of his own childhood and youth are so interwoven with the local background and its magnificent history as to be inseparable.

Patriotic societies and organizations do a great work for good. They plan elaborate ceremonies and programmes, celebrations and pageants to keep the love of country alive and vigorous. But these events are of necessity, short, and soon dimmed by the swift rush of life of today.

So, something to keep in mind the lessons they teach is a necessity. And just such a constant mute reminder will be the park of the Old Shawnee Mission.

Until within the last few decades, the West has been too young for many landmarks. The events of its history have transpired too recently to have acquired any of the romantic mellowing of time. And so the people of the West, to satisfy the instinct for memory-sacred spots, have turned to the older East and South, and either envied or admired their historic past. In return for which the two localities have called the West "crude" and new. They have derived some amusement from the frank and open longing of the West to associate herself

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with their own pasts, even though they could not deny to her the heritage of their memories.

And now, the people of the West have at last awakened to the value of their own romantic history. To the crashing saga, marking a few short years, of the great Plains, with their wild, red-skinned rovers and their thundering buffalo herds. Metamorphised into the huge, rich, commerce-swaying country that it is today. The Western people see that they have taken the history of the East and the South for a foundation and have built over it, for themselves a glorious structure of magnificent history.

The pioneer men and women of the West are being honored today. Landmarks to perpetuate the memory of their joys and their sacrifices are being erected.

The word "landmark" by its too common usage, has come to lose much of the significance it once carried. It has grown almost meaningless by constant repetition. Yet it carries with it the association of something infinitely worthy of commemoration. Of some spot set apart because of events that have transpired there, and because of brave lives that have touched it. Because of its atmosphere and its memories.

And in this truest sense of the word, the Shawnee Mission Memorial Park is a great landmark. May the people of Kansas ever keep it so.