

Virginia School, District #33 (1875) 71st Street & Clare Road - Shawnee *National Register of Historic Places*

Johnson County's latest addition to the National Register of Historic Places is the Virginia School, located at the intersection of 71st Street and Clare Road in western Shawnee. Both as a building and as a long-time center of community activity, the structure is typical of one-room country schools that dotted the rural landscape from the late 19th through mid-20th centuries. The school closed in 1962, a victim of consolidation. The building later served as a church.



Virginia School students and their teacher pose for the photographer, 1924. *Johnson County Museum Collection.*

Recent research conducted by members of the Monticello Community Historical Society indicates that School District No. 33 was originally organized in 1865. The first school structure stood about one-half mile east of its present location. In 1875, Sarah and C.J. Mize deeded an acre to the district for a new school. The present one-room frame building on a stone foundation was completed in time for the first term of school in 1878. Modifications since that time have included the addition of an entry vestibule in the early 1900s. This entryway is topped by a small cupola to house the school bell. Improvements to the building in the 1940s included electric lights in place of kerosene fixtures, a new oil-burning furnace in place of a coal stove and cistern and pump to replace the old well. The building never did boast indoor plumbing. An outhouse still stands to the northeast of the school.

The Virginia School building housed numerous community activities over the years. These included religious services, lyceum programs and such social events as Mother's Day teas in the 1950s. Enrollment varied considerably, with 27 students in 1898 and 57 in 1920. Later increases in the student population led to construction of a second building on the site in 1954. Grades one through four met in one building, five through eight in the other. The second structure was sold and moved at the time of consolidation.

Note: The Virginia School now stands at 7301 Mize Road in Shawnee.

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