

IGNORED STORIES, MISSED OPPORTUNITIES: WOMEN'S
REPRESENTATION IN EARLY-TO-MID NINETEENTH CENTURY
HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUMS

by

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ABSTRACT

Women are frequently under-represented at historic house museums. By quantitatively measuring how we talk about women during house tours, public historians can utilize this information to re-tool the stories they tell about women to create a more complex and individualized narrative. Using Shrum's Gender Matrix, I analyzed the representation of women in historic house museums in Ohio and Tennessee with a period of significance from the late eighteenth century up to and including the Civil War, comparing their interpretation of women during the settlement period, and in religion, abolition, and slavery. This analysis seeks to answer how the selected historic house museums interpret women and offers new interpretive techniques for gender interpretation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Shrum Gender Matrix	
CATEGORY	ABBREVIATION
Lineage/Genealogical	L/G
Resident	R
Object	O
Subject	S
Visitor	V
Maker, User, Buyer of Material Culture	MUBMC
Depicted/Memorialized Material Culture	DMMC
Human Interest	HI
Broader Historical Context	BHC
Gendered Interpretation of Woman's Life	GIWL
Worker	W
Location	L
Preservation Story	P

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CHAPTER I: WOMEN IN THE HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUM

The interpretation of women at historic house museums does not generally describe women as individual actors in history. This problem became evident to me as I toured historic homes with my mother and stepfather during spring break of 2017. Walking through grand old houses, I listened to guides regale me with stories of great men, and the whole time I wondered, “What about the women?”

I wanted to see if this was as pervasive a problem as I thought it was, or if these historic homes were just an aberration. I wanted to know: How do tour guides at historic house museums interpret women in meaningful ways? To do this I traveled to approximately sixty historic houses throughout Tennessee and Ohio to find the stories of women. I found them, but they were well-hidden in plain sight: in single rooms, or one-off comments, in tantalizing breadcrumbs dropped by interpreters, in portraits with just a name, or clothing hung in wardrobes. Women—white, African American, Native, free, or enslaved—have always been half of the population. If we as public historians are not interpreting half of the population in a substantive way, then we are doing a disservice to the public and violating their trust in us and our institutions.

The first historic preservationists in the United States were white women in the mid-nineteenth century.¹ Their ideas about separate spheres, civic

¹ Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington: Smithsonian University Press, 1999), 2; Jennifer Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs: Interpreting Servants Lives at Historic House Museums* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

motherhood, and Great White Men's histories pervade these homes because that is what those women preservationists valued, influenced by nineteenth century historians. The missions devised by those women preservationists are what guide many historic house museums to this day. This interpretive emphasis on men silences women's voices, even though women were the heart and soul of these spaces. The patriarchy is stifling to both men and women. It has silenced women's voices both historically and in the present, and it has left men with an unequal burden.² One site I visited, for example, could tell every camp their patriarch visited during the Civil War, but not what was going on at the house, where the wife kept a meticulous diary that she later published. Because of these patriarchal underpinnings, many historic house museums still utilize the most conservative educational technique as well: the lecture tour and sometimes interpretive panels, which present a sole authoritative voice providing information with scarce opportunity for inclusive dialogue and/or questions. No site I visited innovated in a way beyond an interpretive panel or lecture tour. In our modern society, if we want to grow beyond only telling the stories of men, we should interpret these women according to best interpretive practices, especially at a time when diversifying audiences is a critical issue in museums.

The patriarchal underpinnings were the foundation of most historic house museums, and because the patriarchy still holds sway in many aspects of

² Robert Bahlieda, "The Legacy of Patriarchy" *Counterpoints* Vol. 488 (2015), 15-16. Accessed: January 30, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45136330>.

American life, women, both historical and modern, are still frequently relegated to second-class citizenship in their own homes.³ Women continue to be underrepresented in historic house museums, even though they were more often tied to these sites than men, because our society valued the deeds and politicking of men more than the cultivating of familial relationships and caretaking of women.⁴

Historic sites are governed by boards of directors, which are traditionally guided by a formal summary of the values of their institution, including a mission statement, that organizers wrote when they founded their organizations. These statements go through revisions, but mission statements are rarely changed drastically. It is time for public historians in historic house museums to widen the interpretive scope to incorporate the women who played critical roles in these homes as well as the female preservationists who advocated for the historical value and preservation of these places. My work will help those historians find and interpret these women for modern audiences. Some organizations may widen their scope by adopting other values statements, like vision or values statements, that are generally either broader or detailed than a mission statement.⁵ These are extremely helpful in recognizing the varied histories that sites have, as well as laying out a roadmap to interpretation.

³ Bahlieda, 16.

⁴ Bahlieda, 21.

⁵ “Alliance Reference Guide – Developing a Mission Statement” (Arlington, VA: AAM Press, 2018) <https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Developing-a-Mission-Statement-2018.pdf>.

The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) National Standards and Best Practices for U.S. Museums in Education and Interpretation state that museums have every right to have as narrowly defined mission/vision/values statement as they would like. However, this narrow vision does have the effect of narrowing the potential audience, something many museums can ill afford in today's age. Furthermore, the broader public support museums through taxes and tax credits. Diversifying audiences by including stories of different types of women is one strategy to reach out to new visitors.⁶

Women make up approximately half of the world's population, yet they remain historically marginalized. Despite their percentage proportion, and indeed their representation in historic fields, the stories of women of the past remain mostly marginalized or silenced. This dissertation will quantitatively examine how women are represented in selected historic house museums of Tennessee and Ohio using a tool, here called the Gender Matrix, developed by Dr. Rebecca Shrum. Dr. Shrum is a public historian at IUPUI who specializes in material culture and historic site interpretation. She first developed the Gender Matrix as a tool for use in her graduate classes but has since used it with many historic sites as well.⁷ While the numbers and statistics of representation are critical to this study, it is also important to qualitatively examine how women are discussed on tours. The Matrix categorizes various mentions of women on a tour of a historic site to

⁶ Elizabeth E. Merrit, ed., *National Standards and Best Practices for U.S. Museums* (Arlington, Virginia: AAM Press, 2008), 60.

⁷ At the time of this writing, Shrum's work remains unpublished.

analyze both quantitatively and qualitatively how women are represented at historic sites. From this quantitative and qualitative data the Matrix provides, I have further documented some specific mentions of women that are either not fully interpreted or are only mentioned in passing at six case study sites.⁸ Using digital records, primary archival sources, and some interpretative plans, I was able to better understand how the interpretation of women had evolved at sites in this study. One barrier to my research was some institutional reluctance to share recent interpretative planning materials. Andrew Jackson's home, The Hermitage, in Hermitage, Tennessee, however, allowed me to access to their 2003 interpretative plan as well as early meeting minutes from the Ladies' Hermitage Association.⁹

Historiography

Women were among the first to be involved in the preservationist movement. The earliest efforts at preserving historic houses in the United States emerged with the Mount Vernon Ladies Association (MVLA). The MVLA styled themselves as both eminently patriotic and sectionalist, as it was originally formed specifically for Southern "ladies." Regardless, they set the tone of private individuals saving buildings related to great men, and their original interpretative strategy veered more towards heritage than history. Historical geographer David

⁸ The case study sites examined in Chapter IV are Hanby House (Westerville, OH), Harriet Beecher Stowe House (Cincinnati, OH), Adena Mansion and Gardens (Chillicothe, Ohio), Dickson-Williams Mansion (Greeneville, TN), Mabry-Hazen House (Knoxville, TN), and Oaklands Mansion (Murfreesboro, TN).

⁹ I reached out to other sites for such documentation but received no response.

Lowenthal wrote that heritage is right because we want it to be true, rather than supported by primary sources and research. For example, as much meticulous research as Josephine Wheelwright Rust, founder of the Wakefield National Memorial Association, and her organization did on acquiring period and original artifacts for George Washington's birthplace, what they produced lionized Washington in a way that seemed true to them, even though the replica house they reproduced was not based on research or robust archaeological evidence.¹⁰

Similarly, the Ladies Hermitage Association (LHA) started to preserve the home of another former president—Andrew Jackson in Hermitage, Tennessee. While they did not achieve the same national renown as the MVLA, the LHA successfully navigated political and monetary challenges to save the home of Andrew Jackson and to continue to tell the story of not only his presidency, but his impact in the community. His formerly enslaved worker, Alfred Jackson, still lived at the Hermitage when the LHA purchased the site, and “Uncle” Alfred Jackson was the first volunteer tour guide, telling first person stories of his life at the Hermitage both as a formerly enslaved person, and at the Confederate Soldiers Home at the Hermitage.¹¹

Another early preservationist group was the Association for the Preservation of Virginian Antiquities (AVPA). While ostensibly another women's

¹⁰ Bruggeman, Seth. *Here George Washington Was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 203.

¹¹ Mary C. Dorris, *Preservation of the Hermitage, 1899-1915: Annals, History and Stories: The Acquisition, Restoration, and care of the home of General Andrew Jackson by the Ladies' Hermitage Association for over a quarter of a century* (Nashville, TN: Ladies' Hermitage Association, 1915), 129

organization, they had an advisory board made of men that performed most of the politicking needed to create a statewide historic preservation agency. In the same vein as the MVLA, the APVA preferred heritage over history in the interpretation of the properties they owned, specifically Jamestown. Historian James Lindgren asserts that because the APVA owned both Colonial and Confederate sites, it linked those two time periods together in the collective memory of Virginia.¹² This connection then created a through line from the founding of America to the Civil War, justifying the belief that the Confederacy were the true inheritors of the founding fathers' mission. It also served as a justification for the Lost Cause narrative that many adopted in Confederate women's organizations. For example, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) pushed educational programs throughout the South that articulated Lost Cause ideas. The UDC was also involved in historic preservation and had overlapping membership with the AVPA.¹³

Founded in 1910, The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) was the first regional historic preservation association and headed by William Appleton. The SPNEA marked the beginning of the end for the preeminence of local women-led organizations, like the MVLA or LHA, in historic preservation for nearly two generations. Women were very much

¹² James M. Lindgren, *Preserving the Old Dominion: Historic Preservation and Virginia Traditionalism* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 3-4.

¹³ Lindgren, *Preserving the Old Dominion*, 56.

involved with SPNEA, but it was a mixed gender organization, dominated mostly by the opinions and politicking of men, rather than of women.¹⁴

The 1920s brought a new professionalization to historic preservation, due to the professionalization of the field of history in general. Professional historians and historical architects took over the interpretation of historic homes and pushed the original women's organizations that saved those homes to the margins as volunteers and fundraisers. The reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg marks the completed transition to male-dominated historic preservation. Historian Charles Hosmer, Jr. in *Preservation Comes of Age* correctly notes women's critical role in researching how the buildings looked, but he spent much of the time focused on the main actors of W.A.R. Goodwin and John D. Rockefeller Jr.¹⁵ Both men were fascinating characters who left rich personal documents to mine source material as well as providing public faces to a burgeoning professional preservationist movement. However, this limited focus does a disservice to the women who did the predominant amount of research and travel to make accurate notes of historic reconstructions that still stand today.

The Great Depression brought an expected downturn in preservationist activity. New Deal programs such as the Federal Writers Project and Historic Architectural Building Survey (HABS), reinvigorated the field. The Federal Writers Project documented oral histories of the formerly enslaved and HABS

¹⁴ James M. Lindgren, *Preserving Historic New England: Preservation, Progressivism, and the Remaking of Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1995), 99-100.

¹⁵ Charles Hosmer, Jr., *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1981), 11-73.

created a database of historic properties in the United States, both creating invaluable resources for historians. The focus of this survey was historic architecture, and HABS' purpose was to employ architects, draftsmen, surveyors, etc. during the Great Depression, all professions that at the time were overwhelming male. This led to a blind spot in the preservation of sites of significance to women's history, and a focus on male stories, at the expense of female ones.¹⁶

The outbreak of World War II necessitated a slowing of preservation practices, but the post-war period saw yet another uptick for historic preservation. During this postwar period, more state and local preservation societies became active, perhaps spurred by federal policies of urban renewal.¹⁷ For example, a group of civic-minded women started the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities in 1951 to save the Belle Meade Mansion.¹⁸ Driven by the increase in preservation activity, more federal legislation was passed, like the Historic Engineering Record, and even more critically, the National Historic Preservation Act. The National Historic Preservation Act (1966) created the National Register of Historic Places, National Historic Landmarks and State Historic Preservation Offices. This legislation created a national historic

¹⁶ Barbara J. Howe, "Women in Historic Preservation: The Legacy of Ann Pamela Cunningham," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 1990): 37-39; Ian Tyrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹⁷ Andrew Hurley, "Preservation in the Inner City," in *Beyond Preservation: Using Public History to Revitalize Inner Cities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010): 1-31, Accessed February 24, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bt875>.

¹⁸ "Welcome to the APTA," Accessed February 29, 2020, <https://www.theapta.org/>.

preservation policy across the United States, creating jobs and professional standards for historic preservation.¹⁹ The 1970s and 1980s brought an influx of more women to historic preservation. More women graduated from universities in the 1960s and 1970s, especially in humanities fields. Coming out of the Second Wave Feminist and Civil Rights movements, new social and cultural historians focused on the lives of women, women of color, ‘ordinary’ people, and those who were not the traditional great white men of history. The combined effects these social movements and federal legislation in the post-war period empowered many women in both Ohio and Tennessee to save historic sites in their own backyards. The Fairfield County Heritage Association to be profiled in Chapter Four is one such association.

This focus brought a wealth of scholarship on women, but women’s historical interpretation was relegated as a secondary theme in public interpretation. *Interpretation of Historic Sites*, published by the American Association for State and Local History by William T. Alderson and Shirley Payne Low in 1976, during this period of intense feminist scholarship, warns against the use of secondary themes, and that they are only good for “fringe benefits.”²⁰ While not explicitly stating that women’s history is a secondary theme, their main argument was that sites have primary objectives, and to turn

¹⁹ Norman Tyler, Ted J. Ligibel and Ilene R. Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principle, and Practice, Second Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 46-49.

²⁰ William T. Alderson and Shirley Payne Low, *Interpretation of Historic Sites*, 2nd ed. (1976; rpt., Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1985), 16-17.

away from primary objectives would do a disservice to the public rather than broaden the interpretation.²¹ In most/many cases, this meant relegating women's history to a secondary theme, and some public historians consigned historical women as disposable, which they certainly were not.

The current state of public history and theory on women in historic preservation is focused on re-integrating women back into the historiography of historic house museums. This is most prevalent in the collection of essays edited by Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation* (2003). My research will continue in Dubrow's tradition, showcasing how to interpret preservation at a site, as well as how to equitably analyze the contributions of historical women.

There are three works from which I draw much of my research focus in relation to historic house museums: Jennifer Pustz's *Voices from the Back Stairs: Interpreting Servants' Lives at Historic House Museums*, *Anarchists Guide to Historic House Museums* by Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan, and *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* by Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small. Each of these works reckons with a different "silence" in historic house museums, and by combining aspects from each, I have created a holistic approach to analyzing historic house museums in terms of gender representation.

²¹ Alderson and Low, *Interpretation of Historic Sites*, 16-17.

Pustz's *Voices from the Back Stairs* (2009) looks at how historic sites across the United States interpret domestic service in the late-nineteenth century. Relying primarily on survey responses from historic site, she concludes that as a field, we do not interpret women's work as dignified work, or interpret women's work as work, at all.²² Pustz's utilized self-reported data from museum professionals, taking a quantitative approach, but she used both quantitative and qualitative data to develop her argument, rather than rely solely on the results produced by the quantitative data. That is an aspect that I will take into my research, as well as looking for the interpretation of domestic servitude in houses in Ohio and how docents interpret enslaved workers in Tennessee.

Ryan and Vagnone in their work *The Anarchists Guide to Historic House Museums* (2016) take the traditional narrative and turn it upside down. In keeping with Dubrow and Goodman, they seek to create an authentic experience, not just through storytelling but through actual experience. Taking down the ropes and allowing people to interact with the rooms and houses in a holistic way gives guests a richer experience of what living in those spaces would have been like. These experiences, whether manufactured or discovered, create a memorable encounter for many people.²³ Their critique of reproductions that are treated as originals, influenced my eye towards the impact of material culture on women's

²² Jennifer Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs: Interpreting Servants Lives at Historic House Museums* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 12.

²³ Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast, Inc., 2016), 12.

representation in interpretation.²⁴ My research has found that when rooms do not have “original” artifacts, they are treated by tour guides and guests alike as unimportant, which will be further elaborated upon in Chapter Two.

Representations of Slavery by Eichstedt and Small (2002) is perhaps the work that had the most influence on both my choice in dissertation and my passion for interpretation. Their work challenged curators of historic house museums, particularly those in the South to confront harsh truths about their inadequate portrayal of slavery. Eichstedt and Small take a comprehensive approach and analyze one hundred and twenty-two former plantations in Virginia, Georgia and Louisiana. Both authors have backgrounds in sociology, and use sociological methods to critique language, silences, and overall representations of slaves and free persons of color in plantations museums.²⁵

Eichstedt and Small’s work shined light on an open secret of Southern historic house museums: the ineffective way that the proprietors deal with a fundamental aspect of their institutions. Many of these museums maintain a devotion to decorative arts, without widening the lens to critically look at the people who made and cared for the goods, harkening back to the “fringe benefits” of secondary themes of Alderson and Low. This weakens the interpretation of their sites and does a general disservice to the history they present. Eichstedt and

²⁴ Vagnone and Ryan, 124.

²⁵ Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2002), 8.

Small do not present solutions, however. Concrete guidelines are needed in order to correct the white-centric narrative presented at these plantation museums.

Taken cumulatively, these three works reckon with silences in the interpretation of the time period associated with the home. My work, taking cues from all of these historians, will combine their interpretations and methodologies together to examine how we interpret the breadth of the female experience in the early-to-mid-nineteenth century, including the effect that interpreters' choice made in interpreting material culture has on both including and excluding women from the narrative. I will do this by recognizing the historical silences, providing strategies to address them, and recognizing the limiting effects an objects-based education strategy has on interpretation, especially when it comes to women's representation.

Another work that influenced my research is *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* by Patricia West (1999). First assigned in an Essentials of Museum Management with Dr. Brenden Martin, I was instantly hooked. I knew that I needed to recognize women's role in historic preservation into my dissertation, especially how the story of the site's preservation often includes women. Public historians must recognize the erasures in their own history in order to recognize it in others.

Domesticating History examines four historic house museums and places them in the political context of their founding. She begins with Mount Vernon, moves north to Orchard House, then south again to Monticello and Booker T.

Washington's controversial birthplace site. In examining the political origins of these sites, West touches upon another thread, the importance of women in the historic preservation movement and then later masculinization and professionalization at Monticello and Booker T. Washington's site.²⁶

West first analyzes the founding of Mount Vernon as a historic site. While many know that it was the Mount Vernon Ladies Association that first raised funds to buy the site and open it up to the public, fewer realize that they very clearly had an ulterior motive. The MVLA wanted to appeal to a higher sense of patriotism in the antebellum period, with the country on the brink of civil war. By harkening back to the Revolution, when the nation was just formed, they hoped to at least partially stave off the Civil War and reunite the country. That this movement was led by women is perfectly congruous with the times. The "cult of domesticity" allowed women to be fully active in the home and by extension the *historic* home. The founding of Mount Vernon and the MVLA cannot be divorced from the sectional conflict of the Civil War. While popular mythos has Ann Pamela Cunningham and the rest of the "Ladies" saving the house of the first president out of pure benevolence, West reveals that it was the threat of Northern culture and Northern capitalists into the South that made this a purely "Southern Ladies" project. Cunningham very clearly wanted ladies of the South and the South alone to be involved in saving Mount Vernon, even though the underlying motive was to hold off the Civil War. However, within a year of beginning the

²⁶ West, xi.

momentous project, Northern women also became interested in preserving the home of George Washington.²⁷

West's examination of early women historic preservationists, like those in the MVLA and later at Orchard House and Monticello, first piqued my interest in how public historians and historic preservationists talk about themselves in a public-facing interpretation. She expertly examines the political implications in various house museums, but those first interpretations and motivations tend to stick around in historic house museums. I wanted to know how pervasive these ideas were, and how to honor the women who held them, but did much to subvert them covertly as well. Chapter Four of this work will examine how public historians honor their foremothers in public interpretation.

The modern prescriptive literature for historic house museums is focused on staying financially viable and culturally relevant in the twenty-first century. Works such as *New Solutions for House Museums* by Donna Ann Harris (2007) and *Interpreting Historic House Museums* edited by Jessica Foy Donnelly (2002) were both published by AltaMira, a publishing arm of the American Association of State and Local History. Harris's work focuses on financial viability through case studies, spotlighting different historic house museums using various legal maneuvers to either maintain the collection in some form, or disinvest in an ethical way. These include co-stewardship agreements, reprogramming, long/short term leases, asset transfers, mergers, and other sustainable practices.

²⁷ West, 1-37.

Donnelly's collection of essays is focused on the interpretation within historic houses. As such, there is a chapter on how to interpret gender within a house. "Making Gender Matter: Interpreting Male and Female Roles in Historic House Museums" by Debra A. Reid. Reid examines how to interpret women and men in the gendered context of a historic house museum.²⁸ Her recommendations are sound, such as having well-versed living history interpreters at sites, but that is feat more easily said than done. Reid is correct in stating that in interpreting women and their gender context, public historians must also interpret men in their gendered context. Doing one without the other gives a one-sided interpretation, which already exists within historic house museums. Sites are already discussing what it was like to be a man during these different time periods: when they discuss jobs, land and farm management, roles and responsibilities of citizenship, even hobbies and clothing. The same attention is not always paid to women's experiences.

The newest work, published in 2019, in historic house museum prescriptive literature is Kenneth Turino and Max A. van Balgooy's *Reimagining Historic House Museums: New Approaches and Proven Solutions*. Another collection of essays aimed at practitioners, Turino and van Balgooy divide the book into five parts, with the third containing the majority of information about

²⁸ Debra A. Reid, "Making Gender Matter: Interpreting Male and Female Roles in Historic House Museums" in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, ed. Jessica Foy Donnelly (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 81-110.

interpretation, especially as it applies to marginalized groups.²⁹ Putsz contributes a chapter about interpreting servants' lives, Mary A. van Balgooy writes about the interpretation of women at historic house museums, Susan Ferentinos discusses intimacy, and Jane M. Eliasof and Claudia Ocello write about race and ethnicity. Mary van Balgooy's chapter examining women's interpretation offers an excellent historiographical overview of women's presence both in the interpretation and in the field of historic preservation, examining many of the same ideas I discuss above. She outlines five innovations of women's history that public historians can use to analyze women and offers case studies from the Betsy Ross House, Molly Brown House Museum, and Bradford House to prove that these methodologies work. These innovations are:

- (1) recognizing differences between women and men and among women;
- (2) applying new approaches and methods towards sources; (3) rethinking and challenging the traditional periodization of history; (4) understanding gender as a social construct; and (5) perceiving the fluidity between the public and private realms of human affairs.³⁰

From reading this, I believe that I will fit into the larger discussion on representation in historic house museums by offering quantitative data to back up my assertions, as well as offering low-cost and easily implementable solutions.

²⁹ Kenneth Turino and Max A. van Balgooy, *Reimagining Historic House Museums: New Approaches and Proven Solutions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

³⁰ Mary A. van Balgooy, "Interpreting Women's Lives at Historic House Museums," in *Reimagining Historic House Museums: New Approaches and Proven Solutions*, Kindle Book Location 4472.

Shrum Gender Matrix

There are eleven categories in Shrum’s Gender Matrix assessment tool: lineage/genealogical, residents, workers, visitors, objects, subjects, maker/user/buyer of material culture, depicted/memorialized in material culture, human interest story, broader historical context, and gendered interpretation of women’s lives (Figure 1).³¹ The categories refer to mentions of women during a tour of a historic site and in the context of this study on historic house museums.

Category	Description	Example
Lineage/Genealogical	Woman is referred to by her relation to men in the home	“Mary Martin married John Simmons.”
Resident	Woman is placed as living in the home	“Mary Simmons lived here for 10 years.”
Worker	Woman’s work is recognized as labor	“Mary tended their family’s garden.”
Visitor	Woman visiting the house from elsewhere/going to visit another house/recognizing the social order of visitation	“Mary’s friend, Lucy, visited her often.”
Object	Woman is referred to as the object of someone else’s action	“John built the house for Mary.”
Subject	Woman is the subject of her own action	“Mary decided where the house would be built.”
Maker, user, buyer of material culture	Woman is referred to as the maker/user/buyer of material culture artifact	“Mary painted this landscape scene.”

³¹ Rebecca Shrum, “The Matrix for Understanding and Expanding Coverage of Race and Gender in Historic Site Interpretation” (presentation, OZ Arts Nashville, Nashville, Tennessee, April 28, 2016).

Depicted/memorIALIZED in material culture	Portrait/sculpture/other material culture depicts a woman	“Here is a portrait of Mary as an older woman.”
Human Interest Story	Woman features in a story that does not give insight to her life, but is an interesting story	“John and Mary were married in the middle of a rainstorm, which flooded the first floor of their home.”
Broader Historical Context	Woman’s perspective of broader historical landscape (diary entries discussing troop movements, etc.)	“Mary, like many people during the Revolutionary Era, considered herself a citizen of England.”
Gendered Interpretation of Women’s Lives	How gender and the societal construction of gender in that time period affected her life, or what it was like to be that individual woman	“Although Jane wanted her daughters to receive as much education as did her sons, John felt different because, as was the practice at the time, he had control of the family’s finances. She was not able to obtain the kind of education she wanted for her daughters.

Figure 1: Shrum’s Gender Matrix Categories

The lineage or genealogical category refer to instances when only family information is given about a woman, such as “she is the wife/mother/sister of” with no substantive information of her life. According to Shrum, this is the most frequent way women are mentioned at historic sites. The next three categories are self-explanatory, women being referred to broadly as residents of the sites, workers at the site (including the enslaved and servants), and visitors to the site. Frequently, women are not actually placed at the site directly, only through indirect language, like the lineage/genealogical categories. Placing women physically in the space the same way that we do with men exposes the complex physical landscape that women occupied in the same, yet very different ways, that men did.

The 'object' category exists for when women are referred to in the context of a transaction, or interaction in which something is being done *to* them, but they are not portrayed as having any agency. 'Subject' is the exact opposite, women are now portrayed as having agency over their own actions.

There are two categories that use material culture: Women as makers, users, buyers of material culture, and women depicted or memorialized in material culture both show how women are secondarily interpreted at historic sites. Frequently, the only material culture-related mentions of women, in conjunction with lineage/genealogical, are portraits of them.

The last three categories of Shrum's Gender Matrix involve women as part of a story. The first is just a human-interest story, in which women are featured or mentioned, but there is nothing to be gained about what her life was like. These are typically exciting or tragic events, like fires or interactions with famous people. The second is when women are used to explain the broader historical context. The story gives more information about history, but it is unrelated to gender or her experiences as a woman. The last category in Shrum's Matrix is a gendered interpretation of women's lives. This would be a story that gives more detail about what it was like, not only to be a woman during the period of significance, but *that* woman, and how gender and the societal construction of gender and meaning ascribed to womanhood, affected her life. This category recognizes that gender is a social construct: values of past societies influenced the

portrayal of gender during the time period, and thus how historians analyze gender in the present as well.³²

The point of the Matrix is to provide historic sites with quantitative data about how women are portrayed and open up conversations about how they can improve the interpretation of women. Shrum has applied this tool to various historic sites across the United States. The first test city for the Matrix was Charleston, South Carolina. Her findings there set the tone for future findings: women are primarily mentioned in their relation to male relatives and in material culture categories. Other sites have worked with Dr. Shrum and used the Matrix to revise their tour script, like the Molly Brown House in Denver, Colorado, and the Atlanta History Center's newly acquired Wood Family Cabin. Although the Molly Brown House, which is focused on a woman's story, already had robust interpretation of women, the Gender Matrix revealed ways in which they could enhance their interpretation to include a fuller portrait of the women they discuss. At the Wood Family Cabin, the Gender Matrix assisted public historians in seeing how a new interpretive plan already included more varied interpretations of women and ways they could improve further on the work already being done there.³³

I have added two more categories to the Matrix for the purpose of this study. In dealing with historic house museums, it is also important to note the location in

³² Mary A. van Balgooy, "Interpreting Women's Lives at Historic House Museums," in *Reimagining Historic House Museums: New Approaches and Proven Solutions*, Kindle Book Location 4472.

³³ Rebecca Shrum, "The Wages of History: Emotional Labor on Public History's Front Lines" (American Association of State and Local History Annual Meeting, Kansas City, Missouri, September 27, 2018).

the house where women are primarily discussed, because women are all too frequently relegated to one room, if that, and may not have been a room they would have typically inhabited. Within this category, I also examine how sites preserve the space in which the interpretation of women takes place. If the space reserved for men has been better preserved, and the space for women has received less attention, then there is some unconscious bias in interpretation. The second category that I added is the preservation story of the site. Frequently, women were the drivers of the preservation movement, and removing the preservation story from the narrative, or removing women from that narrative if present, are ways that site managers have silenced women's voices.

For the purposes of this study, each mention of a woman has been placed in only one category. While many mentions may fall into multiple categories (for example: subject and gendered interpretation of a woman's life, or location and preservation story) I felt it best to limit one label for each mention, to keep the charts that follow more readable and to absolutely positive the data did not have the appearance of being artificially inflated. This required some judgement calls on the part of the researcher, and they might not always be perfect, but I felt I placed each mention in the category that best described the whole story rather than a discrete part.

The Gender Matrix is a quantitative tool that makes it easy for boards and staff to quickly grasp the state of women's history interpretation at a public site. Using it can lead to qualitative conclusions about the interpretation of women's

lives at historic sites. By recognizing that women are primarily mentioned in a lineage/genealogical context, public historians can reorient their interpretive language to tell more substantive and diverse stories about women, including their motherhood, but also work responsibilities, education, marriage, social life, leisure time, and labor. The Gender Matrix gives public historians hard data, and this dissertation is about collecting, analyzing, and applying solutions.

Scope of Study

My dissertation research is a comparative study of the representation of women in historic house museums in Ohio and Tennessee of the early to mid-nineteenth century and examines how the selected historic sites represent women as complex individuals in a domestic setting. I chose to further expand this question into a story about the North and the South, considering the complexities of the Civil War and social reform movements of the antebellum and bellum periods. By comparing Ohio and Tennessee, two areas with early statehood histories that start out similarly, but very quickly diverge, I can then examine the effect of the social reform movements in the antebellum period in women's representation in historic house museums. I posit that the social reform movements in Ohio, such as antislavery and abolition, women's suffrage, temperance, and religion, coupled with the constraints placed on Southern women because of the idealization of Southern womanhood contrasted with the subjugation of black women, will lead to a greater quantitative representation of women in Ohio than in Tennessee.

In examining women's representation in historic house museums of the nineteenth century, I will add to the theory of public history by giving quantitative data to show where the field is at this current moment of reckoning with gender issues in fields of work, like the #MeToo viral hashtag where women acknowledged the rampant sexual assault and rape in our culture, as well as measuring how we talk about women in a historic context. By measuring these mentions of women, public historians will be able to recognize how we discuss women and whether that language minimizes them or recognizes their accomplishments in a meaningful way, which hopefully will lead to change in interpretation and representation.

Methodology

In order to assess how sites in these states represent women, I have chosen approximately sixty sites in Ohio and Tennessee that interpret the historical period up to the Civil War, including sites that also have Civil War interpretation. A complete list of these sites is below. The selection process was relatively simple. I began my research by asking Dr. Carroll Van West what sites he knew of in Tennessee, then started Googling 'historic house museums' and 'Tennessee'. Two sites that had the most historic houses on them were the Historic Market Database and Wikipedia. From these sources, I generated a list of all the historic houses in Tennessee, and then removed the sites that did not interpret some time period between the late eighteenth century up to and including the Civil War. I further winnowed the list down by removing those sites that were permanently

closed or had a dead phone number/web link. I repeated this process in Ohio, in consultation with Megan Wood, the Director of Cultural Resources at the Ohio History Connection. Their advice was invaluable to me as I generated sites to examine. Because of time and monetary constraints, I decided that it was best to only visit each site once. While I recognize that this means I might have received an unusual rather than representative tour at any one individual site, the number of sites I visited enables a pattern in interpretation in these two states to emerge across sites. In addition to this, most visitors to a historic site visit only once, so this method considers what the typical historic house visitor might see.

I chose to divide the houses into two time periods, early statehood and antebellum, based on the time period that they primarily interpret. The early statehood period includes houses that primarily interpret a period of history from about 1800-1830 and the antebellum period includes houses from approximately 1830-1860. Admittedly, these categorical terms are not perfect for both states in both periods, but the function of the categories is to delineate interpretation from the early nineteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, including the tumultuous period of the Civil War. In addition to these two time periods, many of the historic house museums, especially in Tennessee, included a heavy focus on the Civil War. As a century-defining event, it was impossible to ignore as I began visiting sites, and as such, I have included sites that also interpret the Civil War in addition to their interpretative focus on the early statehood and antebellum periods.

Further delineation is needed as well. Many of the historic house museums continue their interpretation well into the twentieth century, as the houses changed hands and the preservation societies came to be. I included the data about women in these periods in my collection as well, because guests on a tour will not stop listening or leave the tour after the guide finishes a specific time period. While these later time periods are not the primary focus of this work, I felt it disingenuous to not include those data points. I have called these categories postbellum, if the tour ends before the first World War, and twentieth century if the tour continues into the mid- or late twentieth century. When discussed, all the houses will have notes describing their primary interpretation period, as well as notations marking any other interpretation periods, so the reader can understand the nineteenth century interpretation and get a peek at how it might improve in the twentieth.

As part of my residency, after I toured my selected historic house museums I spoke to either the interpreter on staff or a supervisor to let them know about my research. I then offered those sites their Gender Matrix reports, as well as a consultation with me to review what strengths and opportunities I identified at their site, stipulating that those would be provided upon the completion of my dissertation. Most sites (40 of 59) did express a willingness to see their results, and those reports are compiled for consultation with site managers and directors. In this way, I hope both the Gender Matrix and my research can be of use where it can do the most good: at historic sites.

The first chapter will explore the houses that primarily interpret the early statehood period in both states. They include homes that only interpret this period as well as those that also interpret the antebellum and postbellum periods. This chapter will also examine the similarities of Ohio and Tennessee during this early time period, as well as how they quickly diverged. Part of this examination includes the function of kitchen material culture and the interpretation of women's work in the home, as well as the romanticizing of 'frontier' life.

The second chapter will examine the historic house museums that primarily interpret the antebellum period, including those that also interpret the postbellum, but not the early statehood period. There are far more houses in this category than in the early statehood period, so the data is further delineated into those homes that interpret religion and education. My supposition is that the prevalence of reform movements in Ohio at this point in time leads to a larger representation of women there than in Tennessee. While the outcome is true, it is not for the reason I expected. A primary theme of this dissertation is the disconnect between academic historians and public interpretation, which is more prominent in this period than in the early statehood period. Academic historians of women in the mid-nineteenth century frequently identify suffrage and temperance as the primary reform movements that interested women during this period. However, historic house museums interpret microhistories and focus on education and religion, particularly in Ohio. While suffrage and temperance are unquestionably important, they are not recognized as important in *individual* lives as religion or education.

Chapter three is the qualitative side of the data-gathering Matrix. I chose three sites each in Ohio and Tennessee categorized according to the American Association of State and Local History's Institutional Budget Membership categories. I focused on sites that all have annual earned incomes less than \$500,000 per year, because equality in representation should not just be limited to those sites with the budget to include it. I researched the women, both those who were the primary focus and passing mentions in site interpretation, to show how these sites could include more substantive stories of women, as well as provide the raw data of how they currently interpreted women. For the further research, I chose to rely primarily on digitally available sources, to show that this information is available.

Chapter four examines the preservation history of both states and how historical organizations in those states collectively interpret their own preservation stories. This focuses on how individual sites interpret their preservation story, then the data is aggregated to draw conclusions about what the selected sites in Ohio and Tennessee suggest about how organizations in those two states interpret their preservation. Two case studies, the Ladies' Hermitage Association and the Fairfield County Heritage Association are examined, as well as how their sites interpret that preservation story. I also recognize the importance of preservation networks like the Ohio History Connection, Ohio Local History Alliance, Tennessee Historical Commission and Center for Historic Preservation in each state.

There is little in the public tour interpretations about how these large, old, houses came to be with us today. My research has found that tour guides frequently do not talk about the preservation of the house, either in the past or the ongoing work. If it is mentioned at all, it is to discuss what the workers found when tearing down new additions, not who was behind making the decisions to tear those additions down. In touring sixty historic house museums over the past two years, half did not discuss their preservation at all. Public historians must recognize, vocally, the work of those who came before us, especially if they frequently go unnamed, and make sure that the public knows the names of the local women and men who banded together to save the proverbial house on the hill.

Tennessee Historic House Museums

Early Statehood

Bowen-Campbell House (Mansker's Station) – Goodlettsville, Tennessee

Carter Mansion - Elizabethton, Tennessee

Tipton-Hayes State Historic Site – Johnson City, Tennessee

Marble Springs – Knoxville, Tennessee

Early Statehood/Antebellum

Blount Mansion – Knoxville, Tennessee

Doak House – Tusculum, Tennessee

The Hermitage - Hermitage, Tennessee

Trousdale Place – Gallatin, Tennessee

Rock Castle – Hendersonville, Tennessee

Early Statehood/Antebellum/Civil War

Traveller's Rest - Nashville, Tennessee
 Oaklands - Murfreesboro, Tennessee
 Ramsay House - Knoxville, Tennessee
 Historic Cragfont – Castalian Springs, Tennessee

Antebellum

Polk Boyhood Home – Columbia, Tennessee
 Magaveny House – Memphis, Tennessee

Antebellum/Civil War

Belle Meade Plantation – Nashville, Tennessee
 Belmont Mansion – Nashville, Tennessee
 Crescent Bend - Knoxville, Tennessee
 Davies Manor - Memphis, Tennessee
 Dickson-William Mansion - Greeneville, Tennessee
 Rippavilla Plantation – Spring Hill, Tennessee

Antebellum/Civil War/Postbellum-Twentieth

Croft House (Historic House at Grassmere) - Nashville, Tennessee
 Mabry-Hazen House – Knoxville, Tennessee

Civil War

Carter House - Franklin, Tennessee
 Carnton Plantation - Franklin, Tennessee
 Historic Sam Davis Home - Smyrna, Tennessee

Antebellum/Postbellum-Twentieth

Wynnewood State Historic Site – Castalian Springs, Tennessee

Ohio Historic House Museums*Early Statehood*

DeWitt Homestead - Oxford, Ohio

Schoenbrunn Village – New Philadelphia, Ohio

Early Statehood/Antebellum

Adena Mansion & Gardens - Chillicothe, Ohio

Betts House - Cincinnati, Ohio

Shaker Historical Museum – Shaker Heights, Ohio

The Stone Academy - Zanesville, Ohio

Sherman House Museum - Lancaster, Ohio

Prospect Place Estate - Trinway, Ohio

Wolcott House – Maumee, Ohio

Zoar Village – Zoar, Ohio

Early Statehood/Antebellum/Civil War

Quaker Yearly Meeting House – Mt. Pleasant, Ohio

Dr. Increase Mathews House - Zanesville, Ohio

Early Statehood/Antebellum/Postbellum-Twentieth

Dunham Tavern Museum – Cleveland, Ohio

Early Statehood/Antebellum/Civil War/Postbellum

Perkins Stone Mansion - Akron, Ohio

Antebellum

Harriet Beecher Stowe House - Cincinnati, Ohio

McGuffey House and Museum – Oxford, Ohio

Patterson Homestead - Dayton, Ohio

Antebellum/Civil War

John Brown House – Akron, Ohio

John P Parker House - Ripley, Ohio

John Rankin House – Ripley, Ohio

Antebellum/Civil War/Postbellum-Twentieth

Glendower Mansion - Lebanon, Ohio

Hanby House – Westerville, Ohio

Hayes Presidential Library - Fremont, Ohio

Kelton House Museum & Garden - Columbus, Ohio

Marietta Castle – Marietta, Ohio

Civil War

McCook House - Carrollton, Ohio

Antebellum/Postbellum-Twentieth

Taft National Historic Site - Cincinnati, Ohio

Georgian Museum – Lancaster, Ohio

Heritage Village Museum - Sharonville, Ohio

CHAPTER II: CREATING HOME ON THE “FRONTIER”

In the late eighteenth century, European immigrants to North America considered what we now think of as the states of Ohio and Tennessee to be wilderness landscapes, the frontier of America, and sought to populate them. The influence of migrants to both regions shaped the path of their histories. One important influence in their separate trajectories is who migrated to which state and when, which then influences their economic and political differences.

Ohio and Tennessee both received migrants from North Carolina and Virginia. The southern influence is much stronger in Tennessee, due to proximity. There are, however, pockets of strong southern support in Ohio to this day that pay homage to their southern roots in a midwestern state. Migrants to Tennessee from this area became farmers, as they did in Ohio, and later bought enslaved people to work their farms.¹ The first state carved out of the Northwest Ordinance was Ohio, where most of its migrants came from the East, importing their beliefs to Ohio and creating a home for freed people and freedom seekers later in the century.² White migrants from Connecticut and Western New York (the latter also known to historians as the ‘Burned Over’ District) settled much of Northeast

¹ Multiple tours; John D. Barnhart, “The Tennessee Constitution of 1796: A Product of the Old West,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (November 1943): 532-548 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2197663>.

² Lois Kimball Mathews, *The Expansion of New England: the spread of New England settlement and institutions to the Mississippi River, 1620–1865* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962), 175; R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest 1720-1840* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1996), xi.

Ohio, creating a base of religious and abolitionist minded people there, which trickled down to other areas of the state.

The landscapes of these areas were similar as well. While Tennessee was obviously the warmer climate, both states possessed rich soil perfect for large scale agriculture, but the influence of slavery in Tennessee pushed agricultural production towards staple crops, such as cotton and tobacco. By the mid-nineteenth century, Tennessee was consistently in the top ten states in agricultural production, exporting their surplus for others. Small family farms were the primary way that Tennesseans lived their lives and cultivated their food, but the influence of large-scale plantation-style agriculture was quite prevalent in politics and the economy. Plantation homes remain on the landscape as historic house museums and their outsized presence creates the false impression that most Tennesseans in the early-to-mid-nineteenth century lived in this dichotomy – wealthy white planters or enslaved.³ Research by Anita Shafer Goodstein shows that there were few large plantations in Tennessee. In 1800, forty-four percent of the population of Nashville was African American. Twenty years later, census record showed that ninety-five percent of enslaved people lived in households with two other enslaved workers.⁴ By 1860, the census shows that only one person owned more than three hundred slaves, and forty-seven owned more than

³ Donald L. Winters, “Agriculture” *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Tennessee Historical Commission, Last updated: March 1, 2018, <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/agriculture/>.

⁴ Anita Shafer Goodstein, *Nashville, 1780-1860* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1989), 88.

one hundred. The vast majority of all slaveowners held fewer than ten enslaved persons in bondage, accounting for less than forty percent of the total enslaved population.⁵

Ohio is also home to a rich agricultural heritage. Still considered part of America's 'breadbasket', over half the land in Ohio is still farmland.⁶ The major products were wheat and corn, becoming number one in corn production by 1849. While both landscapes were conducive to large scale agriculture, Ohio did not rely on enslaved labor for their farms, because slavery was illegal in both the Northwest Territory and remained illegal under the Ohio Constitution of 1803.⁷ The absence of slavery leads to a romanticized version of frontier life portrayed in historic house museums of the early time period, with a particular focus on women's work, though it is rarely identified as such. The romanticized version can be corrected by utilizing works like Emily Foster's *American Grit: A Woman's Letters from the Ohio Frontier* (2002) and Harriette Simpson Arnow's *Seedtime on the Cumberland* (1960).⁸

This chapter will analyze historic house museums in Ohio and Tennessee that interpret the early statehood period through the Civil War. This includes sites that only interpret the early statehood period, early statehood and antebellum periods,

⁵ Anita S. Goodstein, "Slavery," *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Tennessee Historical Society, published October 8, 2017, <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/slavery/>.

⁶ "2018 State Agricultural Overview – Ohio," https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/Ag_Overview/stateOverview.php?state=OHIO.

⁷ "Agriculture and Farming in Ohio," *Ohio History Central*, Ohio History Connection, Accessed November 4, 2019, https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Agriculture_and_Farming_in_Ohio.

⁸ Emily Foster, *American Grit: A Woman's Letters from the Ohio Frontier* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 2002); Harriette Simpson Arnow, *Seedtime on the Cumberland*, (1960 rpt., East Lansing: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

and early statehood, antebellum, and Civil War periods. First, the role of material culture will be examined, particularly that of kitchen technology in early statehood historic house museums, across both states. This study will then explore the Matrix breakdown of Ohio sites that interpret the early statehood period and continue that exploration forward in time with sites that interpret the early statehood and antebellum period, then finally the early statehood, antebellum and Civil War periods. The same pattern will be followed for Tennessee. The concluding section will compare the two states in these time periods, including a discussion of racial demographics, and then discuss the role of reproductions in historic house museums of these eras.

There are two broad categories that the material culture in these early statehood museums fall into: agriculture and kitchen technology. While there is significant overlap within the two categories, separating them along gender lines, with “men’s” tools considered to be agricultural products and “women’s” tools considered to be kitchen technology, creates an interesting picture of how public historians interpret the past.

While material culture interpretation is obviously present at nearly all the sites visited for this dissertation, these two categories, agriculture and kitchen technology, become the primary way that the people who lived in the house are interpreted. Very often, especially in those historic house museums that only interpret the early statehood period, there are no portraits, and their clothing has long since been repurposed or deteriorated. Of those sites interpreting the early

statehood period that discussed what was original to the family, reproductions, or period pieces, the majority stated that they had more reproductions or period pieces than original. While some furniture and sundry items remain, the objects in the kitchen and on the farm/plantation tell the story of the individuals who lived and worked within the walls.

At a historic house museum of the early statehood period, interpreters gender the use of technology: women used most domestic technological objects, and outside the walls, where applicable, technological objects (and buildings) are for male use. If the kitchen is interpreted, this is the location where women's work is interpreted. There is a missing piece to this puzzle, however. Interpreters do not often recognize work in the kitchen space as women's work explicitly. Language also becomes important here as well. Many interpreters use a gender-neutral "they" when discussing generalities and not individuals. The effort to be inclusive to present-day audiences then belies the fact that the past was highly gendered, with specific male and female roles. This language trick is not limited to one state or one site. Many sites in both Ohio and Tennessee needlessly unsexed women's work. One example is at Mansker's Station (Goodlettsville, TN). The costumed third-person interpreter frequently used "they" when referring to labor that would have been traditionally women's work, such as mending clothes, cooking meals, keeping house, and childcare. Interestingly, the male interpreter gendered an

inanimate object – insisting on calling the forge “she” and “her” – when he never did that for any individual women he described, like Mansker’s wife, Elizabeth.⁹

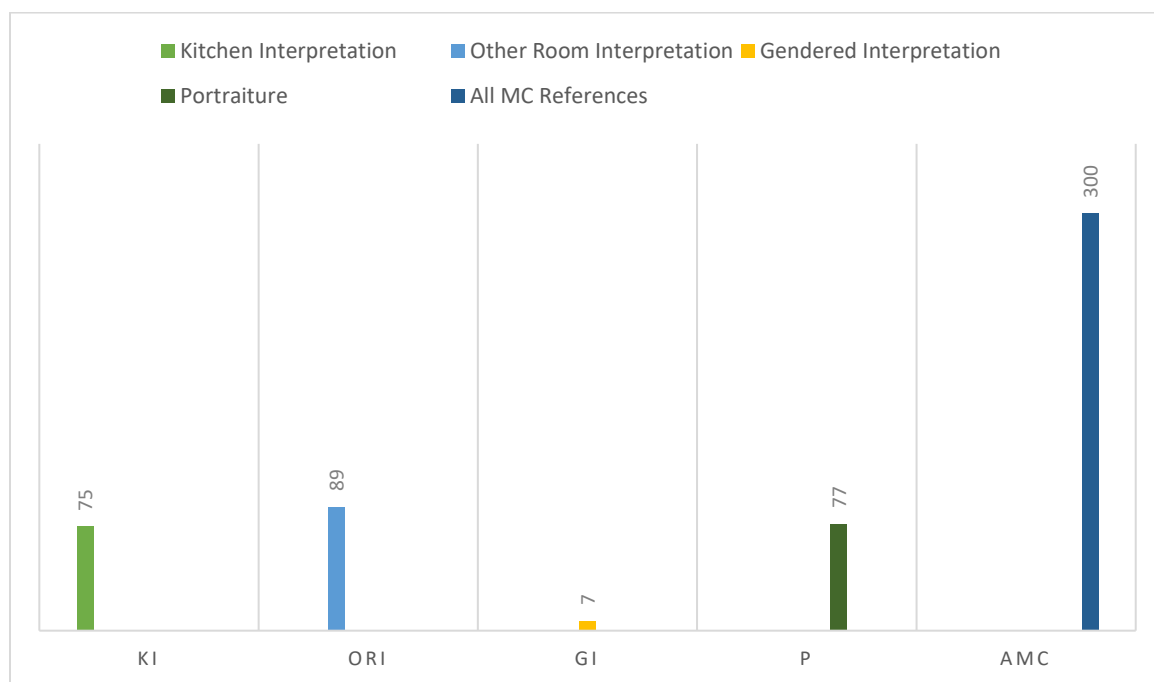


Figure 2: References to Women and Material Culture in Ohio and Tennessee Historic House Museums

The interpretation of kitchen technology is of particular interest (Fig. 2). As the primary room where women’s interpretation (and sometimes the entire interpretation) happens, the interpretation of kitchen technology should be of great importance. Out of three hundred total mentions of material culture, only seven explicitly tie the material culture back to gender – discussing in some way how this was specifically women’s labor and women’s labor alone. Much of the interpretation of kitchen technology is done through a guessing game, where the interpreter holds up an object and asks the guests to guess at the object’s function.

⁹ Mansker’s Station/Bowen Campbell House. Goodlettsville, Tennessee, Field visit April 17, 2018, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

These are usually accompanied by aphorisms, such as “don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater” and that it’s called a “toaster” because you turned the bread with your toe. Very rarely is there any discussion of the drudgery of women’s work, or how labor intensive every day activities were with that technology.¹⁰ This strategy is in direct contrast to research done by Harriette Simpson Arnow (Tennessee) and Mildred Covey Fry (Ohio). Both of these writers examine frontier women, albeit in varying circumstances.

Arnow was a novelist, and wrote three nonfiction books, two specifically about the frontier era of the Cumberland River Valley. These extensively researched books *Seedtime on the Cumberland* (1960) and *Flowering of the Cumberland* (1963) provide thick description of life in the Cumberland River Valley. In *Seedtime on the Cumberland*, Arnow gives a detailed description of frontier women’s work:

women learned to spin and weave, make soap, hominy, cook wild meat, churn butter, and all other skills needed to live as mistress of a civilized household in the woods.¹¹

Arnow also detailed frontier women milking cows, and doing laundry, all while under threat of Native attack.¹²

¹⁰ Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Book, Inc., 1983), 8-9.

¹¹ Arnow, 113.

¹² Arnow, 232.

Arnow's descriptions are very similar to one provided in Fry's article "Women on the Ohio Frontier: Marietta Area." She wrote that the frontier woman was responsible for:

milking the cows; cooking and baking; preparing flax; spinning, weaving, and making clothes for large families; planting and caring for small vegetable gardens; making soap and candles; washing and caring for clothes; cleaning houses; and the rearing of children. The frontier woman by necessity assumed the roles of wife, mother, and housekeeper; counselor, educator, religious instructor, and doctor; and craftsman, weaver, and farmer, while leaving men the responsibility for securing meat, planting, harvesting and grinding the grain, fighting Indians, and building cabins and furniture.¹³

The comparison of the text descriptions shows that frontier women from Ohio and Tennessee had fairly similar duties, and that they largely revolved around tools found in today's historic house museum's kitchens.

There is a hesitancy at historic house museums to stray too far from the what they know about the primary interpretative family specifically. Vagnone and Ryan found this during their research for *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums*, and the same is true for many of the sites visited for this work. The hesitancy is completely understandable, especially when it manifests around what interpreters do not know about women or enslaved people. Speaking to these experiences may be uncomfortable, especially without a direct primary source connection to the family. What interpreters miss when only discussing a specific family is historic context, something we cannot take for granted that our visitors

¹³ Mildred Covey Fry, "Women on the Ohio Frontier: Marietta Area," *Ohio History Journal* Vol. 90 No. 1 (Winter 1981): 60
[https://resources.ohiohistory.org/ohj/browse/displaypages.php?display\[\]=0090&display\[\]=55&display\[\]=73](https://resources.ohiohistory.org/ohj/browse/displaypages.php?display[]=0090&display[]=55&display[]=73).

know. Giving more historic context, both about the time period, gender, racial, and sociocultural relations during the period of significance, creates useful comparisons and a more holistic and accurate interpretation of the past.

The data (Fig. 2) show that compared to other rooms within a historic house museum, more interpretation of women's work happens in the kitchen than in other rooms.¹⁴ Out of three hundred total mentions of material culture, seventy-seven happen in the kitchen, versus eighty-nine in all other rooms combined. The use of work is specific here. Very frequently, white women's *other* work outside of the kitchens is not recognized as a unique labor, such as doing accounts for the house, managing staff or enslaved workers, sewing or other household management tasks.¹⁵ The interpretation of white women's non-manual labor becomes more prevalent in the antebellum period, when because there is more white wealth than in the early statehood period, the historic houses that remain on the landscape more frequently tell stories about wealthy individuals than those who are not, and will be discussed more in Chapter III.

The function of these objects is critical to our eventual portrayal of them as artifacts of the past. Lewis Binford first theorized on the three main functions of objects, but historical archaeologist James Deetz popularized the theory of technomic, sociotechnic, and ideotechnic functions of objects. As Deetz explains

¹⁴ While the total number of mentions in all other rooms is greater than the number of mentions in the kitchen alone, the data set includes information from historic houses that also had separate museums in addition to the house tour. When that information is separated, there are more mentions of women's work in the kitchens than there are outside of it.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black & White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

in *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*, technomic function is purely utilitarian, the object is just used for its intended purpose. Sociotechnic functions take into account how culture shapes our use of objects, while ideotechnic functions is focused solely on ritualized and religious uses of objects.¹⁶ The majority of the interpretation of objects relating to women, especially those in kitchen technology are an explanation purely of the technomic function, doing a disservice to all patrons, whether they are interested in the history of the house or not. Including the sociotechnic or ideotechnic functions of objects, like the candles on the table, would create a deeper and richer connection to the past that is missing with just a purely technomic explanation. Using Deetz' framework, historic house museums can use these same objects to create more gendered mentions of women lives by incorporating both sociotechnic and ideotechnic functions of objects into their interpretations.

To the extent that women's clothing is interpreted in this arena, it is usually used as an ornamental piece.¹⁷ If a historic house museum displays historic women's clothing, it is usually in a temporary exhibit. One notable exception is the DeWitt Homestead in Oxford, Ohio. This cabin, built in 1805 by Zachariah and Elizabeth DeWitt, displays Elizabeth's black bonnet. The interpreter stated that women of the that era generally did not wear black on a regular basis, and

¹⁶ James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 74-75.

¹⁷ Grace Allen, "Frivolous Fashion: Clothing in Tennessee 1790-1830," M.A. thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 2019.

Elizabeth wore a black bonnet every day. She had been nearly scalped years earlier in an Indian attack and wore the bonnet low on her head so the scar could not be seen. The Oxford Museum Association found the bonnet underneath the house when they did restoration work on the cabin in 1973.¹⁸

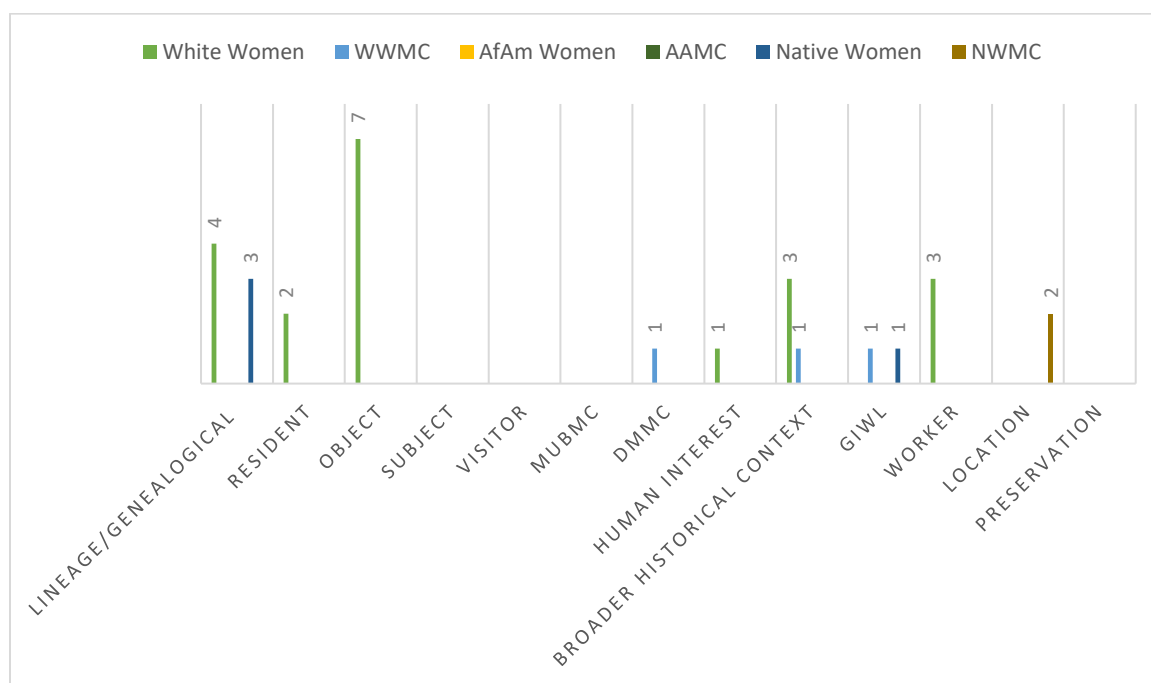


Figure 3: Matrix breakdown of sites (2) in Ohio that only interpret the early statehood period

The earliest sites in this study that interpreted the early statehood period from Ohio were DeWitt Homestead and Schoenbrunn Village. At these two sites, the most frequent reference to women was as objects, which means they were passive actors in the story, things were happening *to* them, but interpreters do not state what their thoughts or opinions were on the matter. (Fig. 3). It is not that far of a

¹⁸ DeWitt Log Home, Oxford, Ohio, Field visit June 9, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

leap for a guest to leave the site with the impression that women of that era were passive creatures with no agency, not active beings who made their own decisions. This is especially true at these sites, because there is not a single mention of a woman acting as the subject of her own action.

These two sites both examine a period in Ohio history in which women *were* active participants in decision-making at a microlevel. Prior research by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich has shown that women of the colonial period, especially those in remote locations, acted as “deputy husbands” by performing both traditional female labor and traditional male labor as well, such as readying fields for planting, harvesting, and other agricultural tasks.¹⁹ Academic historians who study this time period are well aware of how active a role women played in both maintaining and running a homestead, but that information has not seemed to reach public interpretation. While Ulrich writes about the colonial period, the idea of “deputy husbands” is transferrable to other locations that experienced the same relative isolation and technology. In the early 1800s, parts of Ohio were just as remote as colonial Virginia, thus women had to act as “deputy husbands” for their families to survive.

Another interesting section of the data is the interpretation of Native women. Both Ohio and Tennessee had substantial Native populations in their early statehood periods, and both states also have storied conflict histories with

¹⁹ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1982), 35-50.

different Native groups. Tennessee has no mentions of Native women at all, although some sites show collections of arrowheads found on the sites. Only sites in Ohio have actual mention of Native women as individuals, rather than Native people as an aggregate. There are three sites that discuss Native women in Ohio: Hull-Wolcott House (Maumee), Schoenbrunn Village (New Philadelphia), and Prospect Place (Trinway). (Fig. 4) Hull-Wolcott House is discussed in more detail below. Schoenbrunn Village is a recreation of a Moravian missionary settlement in New Philadelphia, Ohio. There are multiple homes and buildings that have some discussion of women, and Native women in particular. Two Native women, Esther and Lucia have their own cabins and are described in the brochure walking tour respectively:

Lucia was a widow who helped with the village orphans. She was also a nurse to those families who needed her services. Lucia is buried in God's Acre. [. . .] Esther lived with the missionaries for 40 years and was one of the most devout converts, traveling to Bethlehem, PA often. She was in charge of the guest house in the village. Esther had a home in Gnadenhutten also. Esther's cabin was the last one built and dedicated. She was also a deaconess in the Schoenbrunn Society, which was a Temperance Society, and the first in America to banish drink.²⁰

Prospect Place has only one mention of a Native woman, as a malevolent figure. After a fire burned the house, she is assigned blame, though the story is acknowledged as apocryphal. In the brochure provided for the self-guided tour she is described as “[. . .] an elderly Native American woman simply called

²⁰ Schoenbrunn Village, New Philadelphia, Ohio, Field visit June 1, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

“Satan” had burned the house because it sat atop the burial place of her people, the Shawnee.”²¹

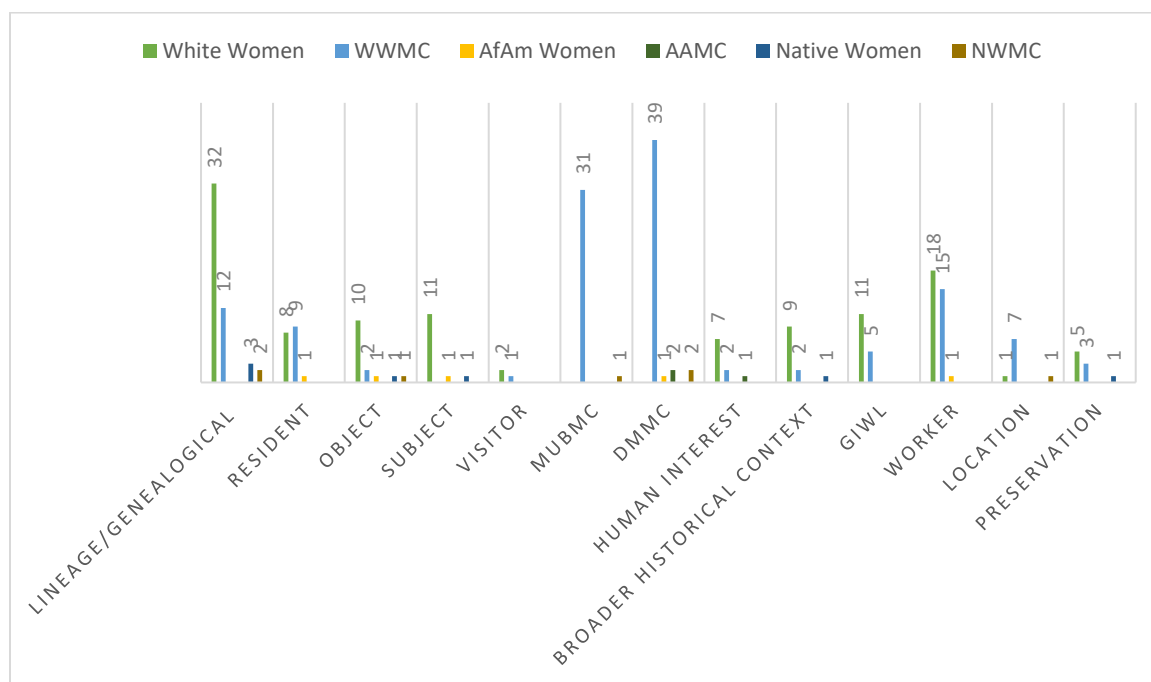


Figure 4: Matrix breakdown of sites (8) that interpret both the early statehood and antebellum periods in Ohio

While there are only two sites in Ohio that focus only on the early statehood period, there are far more that interpret both the early statehood and antebellum periods, a period I am defining from 1800 to approximately 1860. While only two sites in Ohio solely interpret the early statehood period, there are eight sites in Ohio that interpret both the early statehood and antebellum period. The increase in sites that interpret both periods can be explained by increase in population in the state as well as better preservation practices of houses of this period.

²¹ Prospect Place Estate, Trinway, Ohio, Field visit June 8, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

The prevailing trends in interpretation of both of these periods in both states fall in line with other research performed by Dr. Shrum in her Matrix studies.²² Most mentions of white women occur in either the lineage/genealogical or depicted/memorialized categories, while mentions of African American women remain very small (Fig. 4). The data again points to the divide between public historians/interpreters and academic historians in these time periods. Academic historians such as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Mary Beth Norton, Linda K. Kerber, and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese have written volumes on how women of the antebellum era performed important functions, both within and outside the home. However, the interpretation inside the home, where women supposedly spent the majority of their time, most often mentions women in reference to the men in their lives or as represented in or by a piece of artwork adorning the walls, replicating the problems of early statehood historic houses in a different way. Women are now the objects to be admired, rather than passive objects of male action. Also in line with Shrum's finding, mentions of Native peoples were exceptionally scant.

African Americans were always present in the Ohio Territory. When Ohio became a state in 1803, there were 337 African Americans listed, out of a population of 45,000, about .007% of the population of the state at that time, a

²²Rebecca Shrum, "The Matrix for Understanding and Expanding Coverage of Race and Gender in Historic Site Interpretation" (presentation, OZ Arts Nashville, Nashville, Tennessee, April 28, 2016).

small amount, but present nonetheless.²³ By 1840, their numbers in Ohio increased to 17,345 out of 1,519,467, still about .01% of the total population, but a significant statistical increase nonetheless.²⁴ While African American women were present in Ohio, their numbers are small, leading to no mention of them in the early statehood period in these two historic house museums. When their numbers increased in the antebellum period coupled with the role the Underground Railroad has in popular memory in Ohio, the mentions of African American women increase significantly, a topic which will be explored more in chapter two.

One promising interpretation that portrays a woman in Ohio during this period clearly as a subject, that is, as a woman as the primary actor of her own life is the example of Mary Wells Wolcott at the Hull-Wolcott House in Maumee, Ohio. Mary Wells Wolcott and her husband James Wolcott bought land near the Maumee River, using her money. Mary Wells Wolcott was the daughter of Sweet Breeze and granddaughter of Chief Little Turtle of the Miami Nation. She later moved to Kentucky to stay with her father's brother and lived with his family at their plantation during her formative years. Mary Wells Wolcott was of mixed Native and Anglo heritage and she married a white man. The interpretation at the

²³ Shandira Pavelcik, "Ohio's African American Origin and History" *Black Demographics*, Accessed November 15, 2019, <https://blackdemographics.com/states/ohio/>; James A. Rodabaugh, "The Negro in America," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January 1946): 9-29. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2714965>; Booker T. Washington "Negro Settlements in Ohio and the Northwest Territory" in *The Story of the Negro* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fh7v9.14>

²⁴ Pavelcik, "Ohio's African American Origin and History," <https://blackdemographics.com/states/ohio/>

Hull-Wolcott House does not focus on her Native heritage, but rather on her husband's land dealings, family troubles, and to a lesser extent architecture. There is one picture of her with her daughter, Fredericka Wolcott Gilbert, in which they are depicted in Native regalia, but the interpreter stated that this was the photographer's interpretation of Native garb, rather than representative of Miami dress, and not their choice.²⁵

The case of Mary Wells Wolcott, and the interpretive strategy in place at the Hull-Wolcott House, is a case study of the complexities of early statehood life. Mary Wells Wolcott was both white and Miami, royal and common, Northern and Southern. Her existence is proof of a complex, intertwining network of Native and white relations in the old borderlands, yet she is interpreted as a fairly wealthy white woman, rather than Native. We cannot know how she thought of herself, or her mixed identity, but we do know she had an affinity for less fortunate Native peoples. She left the basement kitchen door unlocked, with the fire going and food on the table for those Native people who needed a warm and dry place to stay and a proper meal.²⁶ (Fig. 4).

²⁵Hull-Wolcott House, Maumee, Ohio, Field visit May 4, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

²⁶ Ibid.

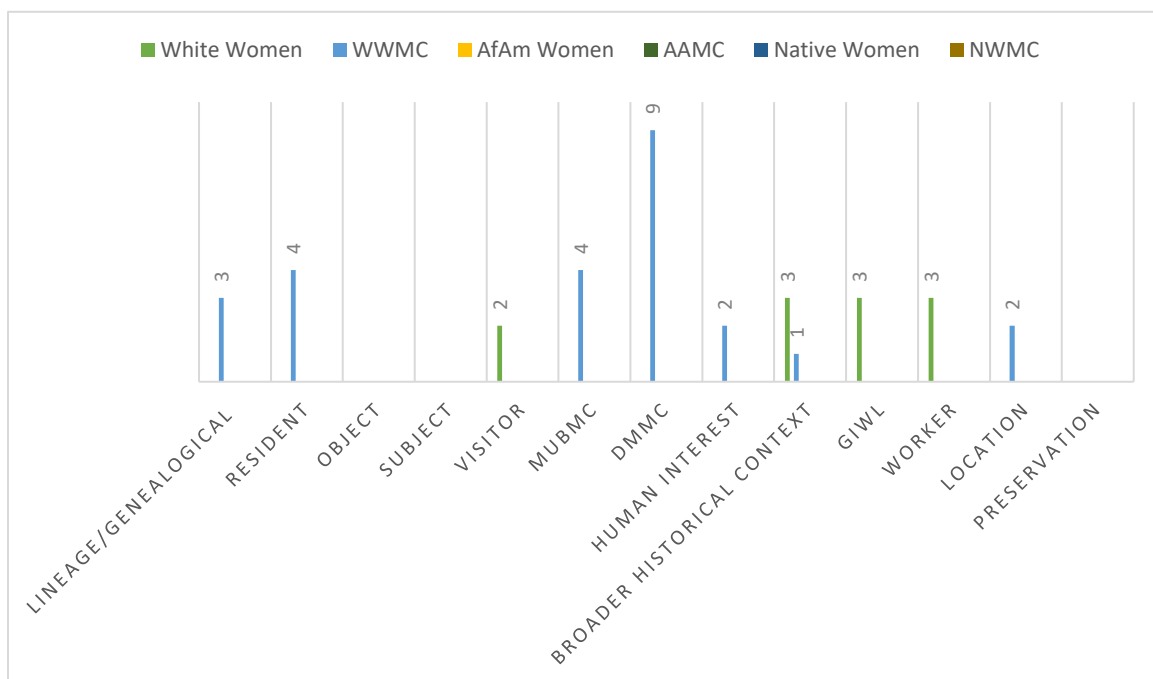


Figure 5: Matrix breakdown of sites (2) that interpret early statehood, antebellum, and Civil War in Ohio

When moving forward in time to examine sites that interpret early statehood, antebellum, and the Civil War, it becomes clear that the war does not loom large on the historic landscape. There are only two places where the Civil War is mentioned, both in Zanesville, located in the southeastern region of the state (Fig. 5). While many of the homes that are included in the previous data set were obviously still standing, the Civil War and its effect on inhabitants is not mentioned. It is even more curious, because there are other sites farther south in Ohio that have a larger focus on the Underground Railroad, but only briefly mention the war itself.

Also notable is that only one of these two sites, the Dr. Increase Mathews House, discusses women during the Civil War. One of the upstairs rooms is

devoted to Zanesvillians during wartime, from the Revolutionary War to World War II. The specific mention of Ella Blocksom is as the object of affection for Reverend Henry De Lafayette Webster. Her guardians did not approve of the match and ended the romance. In his despair, he penned the tune *Lorena*, a song that took the Confederate army by storm. This song, in which a man mourns his lost love, is allegedly part of the reason why the Confederate army had so many deserters. They would hear this morose song, become homesick, and run away. The panel does not discuss whether Ella Blocksom returned his affections or how she felt at being the subject of this ballad.²⁷

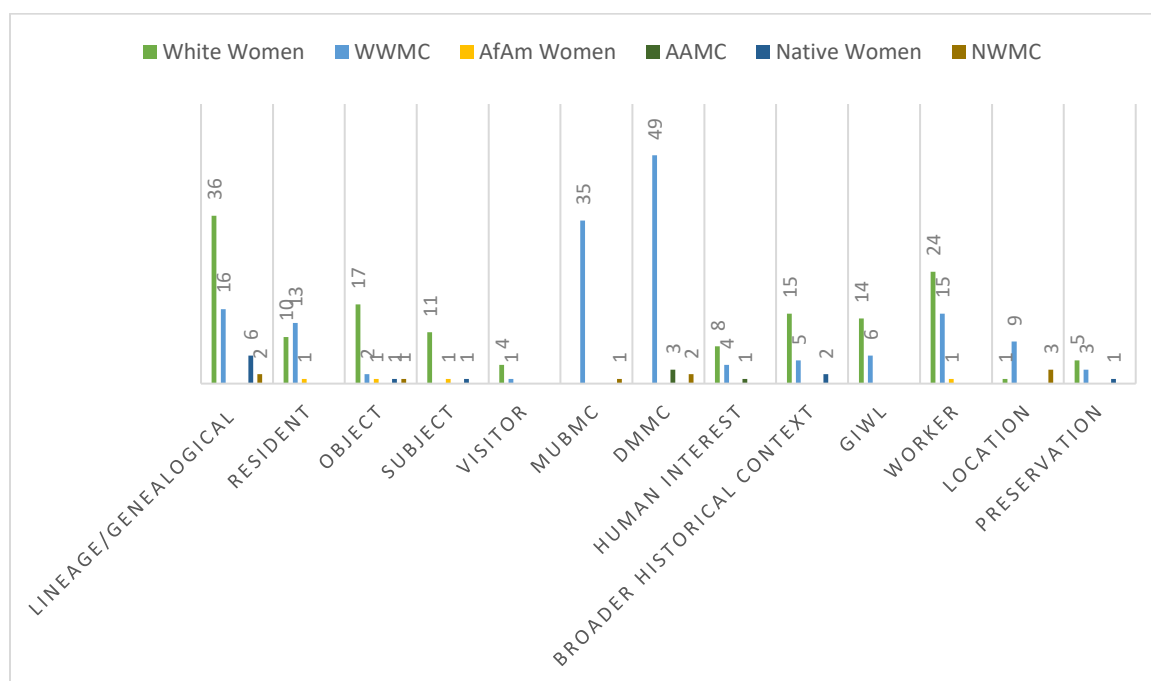


Figure 6: Matrix breakdown of all Ohio sites (14) that interpret early statehood

²⁷ Daniel Webster, "Lorena" *Daily Oregon Statesman*, January 14, 1906, Accessed on The Lawrence County Register, <https://www.lawrencecountyohio.com/history/people/military/civil-war/newspaper-civil-war/lorena/>; Dr. Increase Mathews House, Zanesville, Ohio, Field visit June 8, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

As we examine trends across all the selected historic house museums in Ohio, the same trends noticed at the single-era level become even more stark (Fig. 6). Mentions of African American and Native women are few and far between, eight mentions total for African American women, while Native women fair better with twenty. White women are usually only mentioned in relation to their male relations or objects, with one hundred and fifty-six mentions of women in lineage/genealogical, resident, and material culture categories, compared to one hundred and forty mentions of women in all other categories of women combined. While material culture is the foundational interpretative strategy of these historic house museums, choices made about using it as an interpretative guide has made it a limiting strategy. Only referencing who the people are or the objects, rather than telling substantive stories about individuals and how they used the objects, is an untenable situation that limits the effectiveness of women's interpretation in many historic house museums.

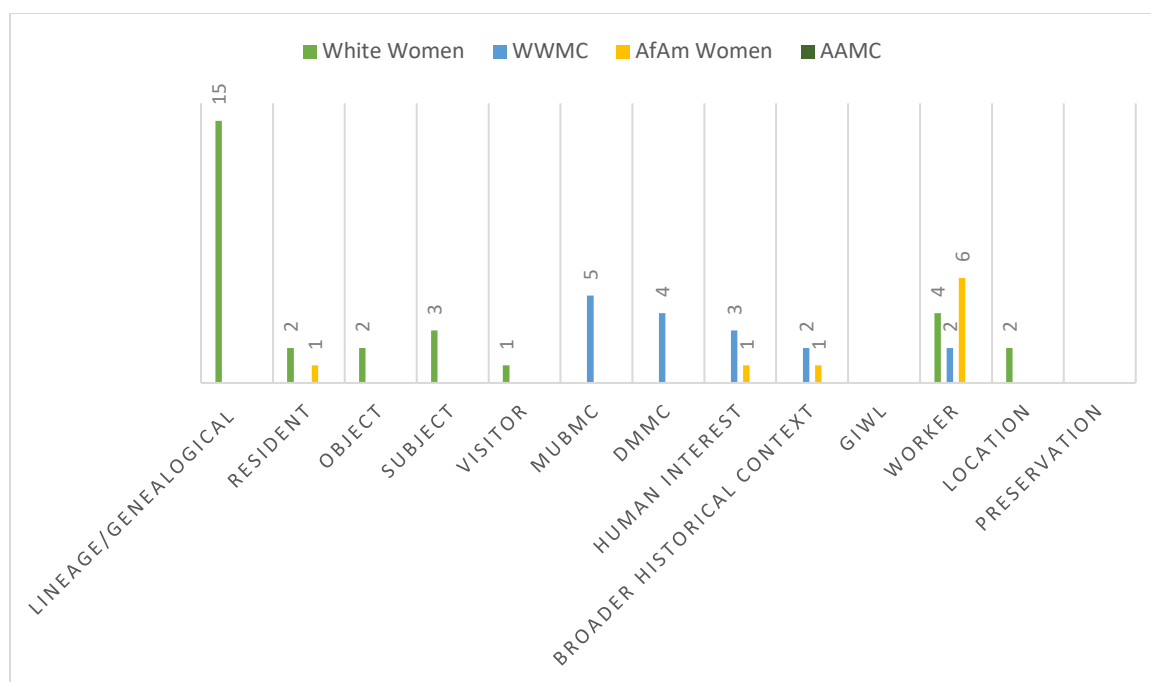


Figure 7: Matrix breakdown of early statehood sites (4) in Tennessee

In contrast to Ohio, Tennessee has double the number of sites that interpret only the early statehood period: Marble Springs State Historic Site, Tipton-Haynes State Historic Site, Carter Mansion, and Historic Mansker's Station. The contrast does not end there. These sites also have far more lineage/genealogical references to white women (fifteen compared to four) as well as more references to African American women (nine compared to zero). Despite the increased mentions of African American women, the context is important. African American women are far more likely to be mentioned in the context of slavery and their role as enslaved people (represented in the worker category), rather than being named as individuals (Fig. 7)

African Americans, free and enslaved, were also far more populous in Tennessee than in Ohio. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the total

number of African American in Tennessee was about 13% of the population. Free and enslaved peoples were also more populous in cities in the early part of the century. By the start of the Civil War, African Americans are over a quarter of the population, and while still present in cities, they remain mostly in rural environs.²⁸

Scholarship done by Goodstein suggests a more fluid nature of African American experience in frontier Tennessee, especially Nashville. Her book, *Nashville, 1780-1860: From Frontier to City*, provides a more nuanced look at life for free, partially free, and enslaved African Americans in the early statehood period. Tennessee's early laws, based on those from North Carolina, were not followed as rigidly in frontier Nashville, leading to a not-insignificant number of enslaved African Americans to function as essentially freed. These men and women hired out their own time (some disobeying the complicated licensure processes involved) and lived apart from their white masters. These partially freed, but still legally enslaved, people created their own communities and networks within the city to trade not only goods and services, but information and companionship.²⁹ The uniform depiction of African Americans at historic house museums solely as enslaved belies a more varied Black experience on the frontier.

²⁸ Richard L. Forstall, United States Bureau of the Census Population Division, *Population of states and counties of the United States: 1790 to 1990 from the twenty-one decennial censuses*, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Population Division, 1996: 3-4; Caleb Perry Patterson, *The Negro in Tennessee, 1790-1865: A Study in Southern Politics* (Austin: University of Texas Bulletin, 1922), 212.

²⁹ Goodstein, *Nashville, 1780-1860*, 71-92.

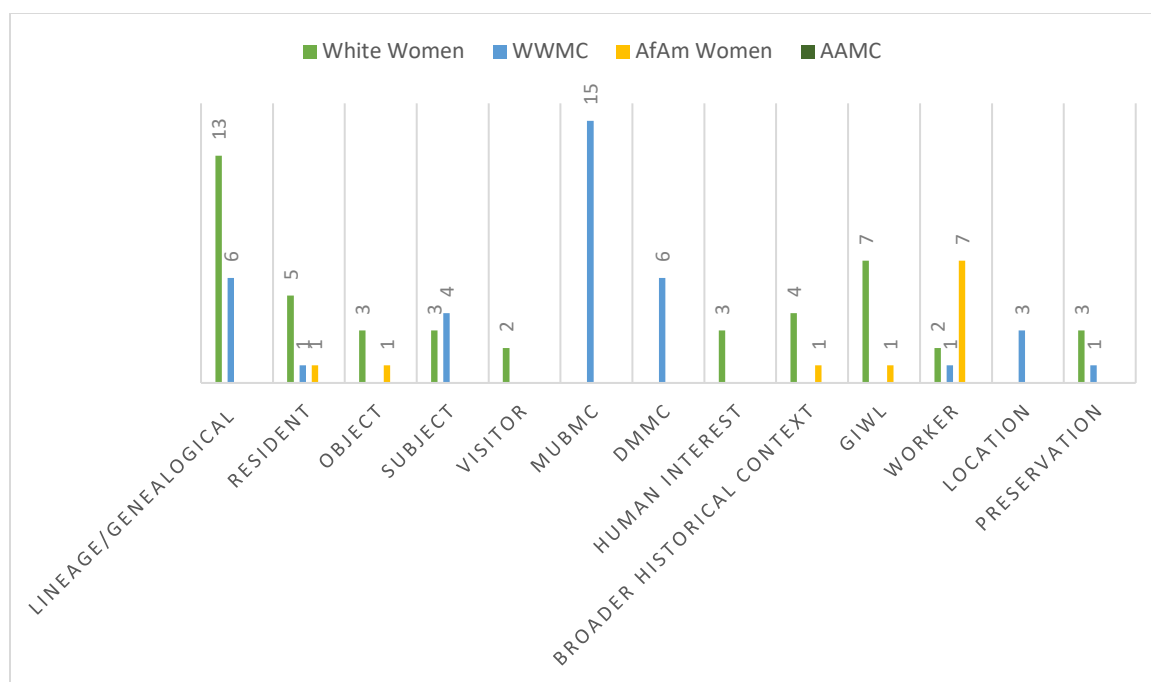


Figure 8: Matrix breakdown of early statehood and antebellum sites (5) in Tennessee

The same trends from early statehood sites are even more prevalent in early statehood and antebellum sites. Mentions of white women and their use of material culture skyrocket, while other categories remain consistent. The number of sites that only interpret this period is only slightly higher as well, five early statehood/antebellum sites to four early statehood only sites. (Fig. 8).

The mentions of material culture continue to obfuscate the meaning behind the artifacts being interpreted. In analyzing individual mentions in the maker/user/buyer of material culture category, ten out of the fifteen represent women as the user or buyer of material culture. The items made by women in the material culture category are all samplers. Samplers, pieces of needlework or embroidery used as an example of achievement, can be a wonderful way to

portray antebellum female education, but in every case, they are not interpreted as such, only as decoration. Samplers were a way for young girls to learn patience, refinement, as well as their prayers and letters. The skills these girls learned from producing samplers they then used for embroidering stitches on their families' clothing. The samplers themselves can function as a snapshot of the women at a formative age and can then lead to an examination of female education in the South.³⁰ Using the Gender Matrix at these sites showed patterns in material culture representation that might not have been as obvious had this evaluation tool not been in use.

The most noticeable increase from the early statehood period to the early statehood/antebellum periods is in “gendered interpretation of woman’s life.” (Fig. 8) The eightfold increase (eight mentions early statehood/antebellum compared to zero in early statehood alone) is most attributable to The Hermitage’s “Rachel Tour” which examines Rachel Donelson Jackson’s life, both before she met Andrew Jackson and their life together. Four of the seven mentions of white women’s lives and the only mention of an African American woman’s life in the category “gendered interpretations of women’s lives” occur at The Hermitage.

There are multiple reasons why The Hermitage and the Andrew Jackson Foundation does such a great job comparatively. First, the Andrew Jackson Foundation and its precursor, the Ladies Hermitage Association, is the oldest

³⁰ Jennifer C. Core and Janet S. Hasson, “Female Education and the Ornamental Arts in Antebellum Tennessee,” *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, 40 (2019) <https://www.mesdajournal.org/2019/female-education-and-the-ornamental-arts-in-antebellum-tennessee/>

preservation association in Tennessee, giving them the advantage of time.

Secondly, because of Andrew Jackson’s status as a former president, his life and the lives of those around him are well-documented, allowing for a natural increase in representation. Thirdly, the Andrew Jackson Foundation, according to their most recent tax filings (fiscal year 2018) are nearly a one million-dollar organization, creating resources that their smaller competitors cannot even dare to dream of.³¹

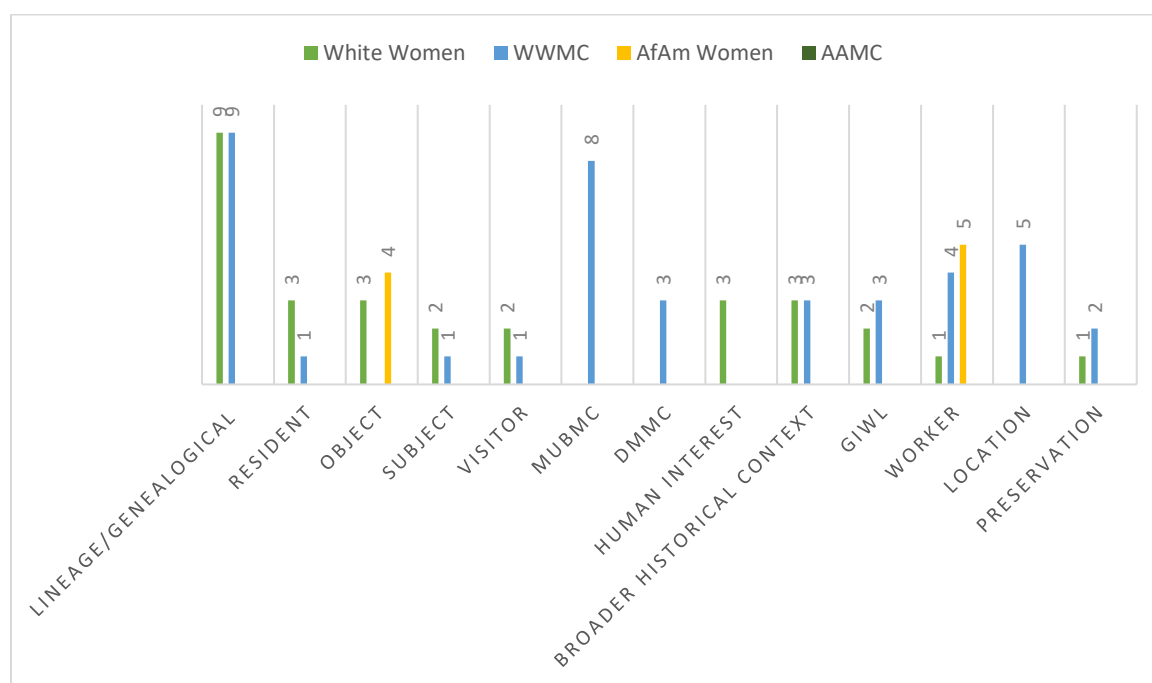


Figure 9: Matrix breakdown for early statehood/antebellum/Civil War sites (4) in Tennessee

³¹ “The Andrew Jackson Historical Foundation, Inc. Form 990 for period ending June 2018” *ProPublica*, Accessed November 8, 2019, https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/display_990/581634161/07_2019_prefixes_56-59%2F581634161_201806_990_2019071116476872.

Once sites in Tennessee start to interpret the Civil War, the mentions of women across nearly all categories decreases. The only categories that see an increase are African American women referred to as objects and rooms in the house that are associated specifically with women (on the Matrix as location), whether or not their primary purpose is to interpret that woman's life (Fig. 9). The increase in the object category for African American women comes from Oaklands Mansion in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, which displays a facsimile ledger entry for the buying and selling of enslaved people. The four women mentioned were sold, either with or without their children, and their price is listed beside them. This is a clear example of a "woman as object" because they are listed as literal objects, with their worth labeled neatly beside them.

The four enslaved women from Oaklands Mansion is a poignant way to illustrate the disparity between white women and enslaved African American women in the South. Many historians like Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Katy Simpson Smith and V. Lynn Kennedy have all noted and written explicitly about this dichotomy in Southern life. Kennedy in *Born Southern: Childbirth, Motherhood, and Social Networks in the Old South* goes one step farther and narrows her focus to childbirth and motherhood, contrasting the vastly different experiences Black and white women had in this era of the Old South.³² This topic in particular is one area of life that many historic house museums dance around constantly, without ever addressing the problem head-on. Visitors to historic

³² V. Lynn Kennedy, *Born Southern: Childbirth, Motherhood, and Social Networks in the Old South* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

house museums are consistently told how many children a woman had, but not where they were born or how she raised them, if the white mother was in fact doing the raising, or the terrifying process of being pregnant in the antebellum South. No historic house museums in the data set addressed pregnancy or child-rearing as a substantive issue.

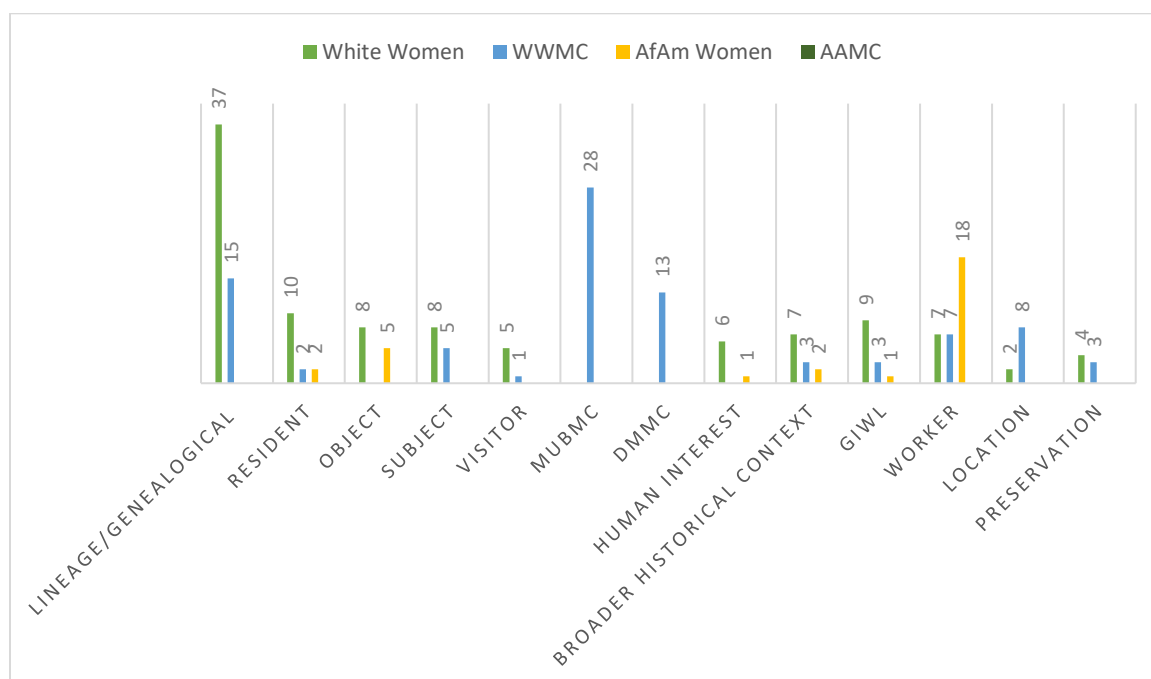


Figure 10: Matrix breakdown of all Tennessee sites (13) that interpret early statehood

In examining all the Tennessee sites that interpret early statehood, including early statehood only, early statehood and antebellum, and early statehood, antebellum and the Civil War, like those in Ohio, the era-level differences become even more pronounced. While there are more total mentions of African American women, those mentions mostly fall into the categories of worker, here primarily as enslaved workers, and objects. Again, the largest

categories for white women is in reference to their male relatives, and as the maker/user/buyer of material culture. (Fig. 10).

Since the 1960s, academic historians have explored both the role of African Americans generally and the wider role of African American women as freed and enslaved individuals. Fox-Genovese in *Within the Plantation Household: Black & White Women of the Old South*, originally published in 1988, makes a concise argument for the complexity of gender relations between white slaveholding women and their enslaved servants, which was an echo of other Black feminist texts from earlier eras.³³ In the collection of writings *A Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, editors Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa eloquently edited poems and essays that show that nearly 125 years after the end of slavery, race is more powerful than gender.³⁴

Stephanie M.H. Camp in *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* uses the concept of rival geography to argue that enslaved women, and indeed all enslaved people, used the landscape of the plantation differently than the white family who lived there.³⁵ This idea is perfectly transferrable to historic house museums, particularly plantation museums in the South. One of the best ways to show the presence of African Americans in these spaces is to show that in reality, they dominated those spaces.

³³ Fox-Genovese, 29.

³⁴ Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981 rpt., Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015).

³⁵ Camp, 7.

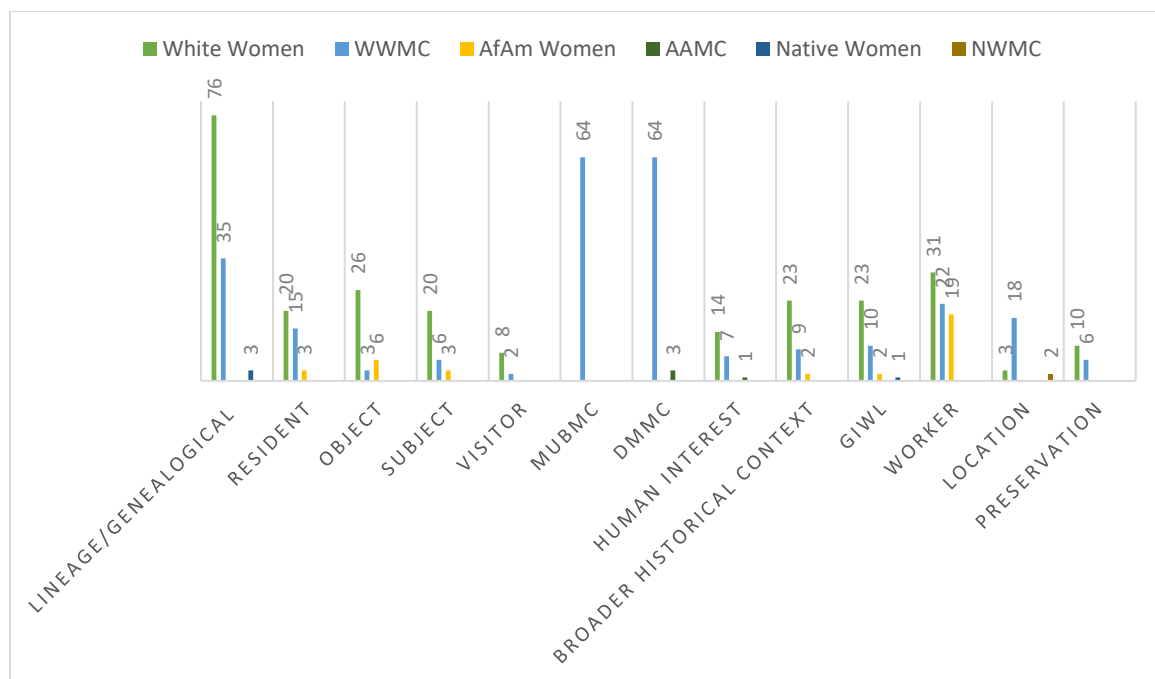


Figure 11: Total mentions for both states in sites (OH – 14, TN – 13) that interpret early statehood only, early statehood and antebellum, early statehood, antebellum and Civil War

The major findings from this study of historic house museums of the early statehood period are the limiting effect of material culture for interpretation of women in the early statehood era (one hundred and twenty-eight total mentions in material culture categories), and the massive disconnect between academic research and public interpretation, especially in regard to African American women. (Fig. 11). While object-based learning is essentially the sole way that historic house museums interpret these spaces, it can have a limiting effect because interpreters do not treat authentic and inauthentic objects as similarly representative. Some sites treat reproductions as reverently as authentic artifacts,

going so far as to bar the entryway to a completely reconstructed room, while others pass by a room with a dismissive glance, stating that “nothing here is original” and it is therefore, not important.³⁶ Neither is a very good interpretative strategy, but perhaps historic house museum interpreters could split the difference: recognizing the role that reproductions can play in hands-on learning, and not dismiss them out of hand. When historians recognize the use of reproductions as material culture artifacts, they can then tell a more holistic narrative, one based on women’s labor and the actual work of managing a frontier home. Doing so will expand their interpretation into the categories of the Gender Matrix that actually tells us something about women’s lives.

Academic historians have over fifty years of quality research on both African American and white women of this era, however that research has not been incorporated into public interpretation. Answering why there is this disconnect between the institutions will perhaps solve most of the representational issues presented in this chapter. There are many reasons for this disconnect, and far too many to be listed here. Acknowledging that there is a disconnect and both sides need to work together to fix it is a big first step in working to correct these issues. There are other explanations, namely institutional policies and institutional baggage, that will be harder to change. While there may be some reasons that it

³⁶ These experiences happened at the Sam Davis House in Smyrna, TN and Cragfont in Sumner Co. TN respectively

has not yet become standard to recognize women's work and contributions in a substantive way, there are no excuses for it.

Ohio and Tennessee were both agricultural powerhouses in the early statehood period. While some may think of agriculture and farming as the realm of men, Ulrich and others have shown that without women these farms would not have succeeded.³⁷ When interpreting women's work in historic house museums of this period, sites in both Ohio and Tennessee tend to romanticize what they consider "frontier life." Many sites use a guessing game strategy to show technological change but obfuscate the role of women in the use of that technology, depersonalizing the experience. The use of object-based learning as the primary interpretative strategy is solid but has some issues that will become clear in the next chapter about historic house museums in the antebellum period. In the next chapter, with vastly more data points, using the passive voice in reference to objects that women used further reinforces the idea of women as objects, rather than actors in history.

³⁷ Ulrich, 35-50.

CHAPTER III: INTERPRETING THE ANTEBELLUM WOMAN

This chapter will examine whether 19th century social reform movements influence how historic house museums interpret antebellum women in Tennessee and Ohio. Nineteenth century social reform movements placed women in leadership positions and as important actors in their communities. Interpretation of these activities at historic house museums would allow a more holistic portrayal of women to emerge. Although many, but not all, of the key leadership roles women played in these movements were held by white women, because the core social movements of the day focused on improving the lives of all races, interpretation of these movements opens the door for a more diverse narrative.

The first section will examine the expansive historiography of both states, including how scholars have understood the lives of wealthy white Southern women, enslaved black women, wealthy white Northern women, and white domestic servants. The next section will then examine the Shrum Gender Matrix data I collected from these historic house museums. Three subsections will provide data on the representation of women in social reform movements that are interpreted in historic house museums: education, religion and abolition, with a final section examining the lack of substantive representation of African American women.

For the purposes of this study, I have defined the antebellum period as laying roughly between 1830-1860. This historiography is especially daunting

when it comes to what is *not* represented in historic house museums: suffrage and temperance. Prior academic research suggested that the primary social movements of suffrage, abolition, and temperance would lead to more substantive mentions of women in historic house museums in Ohio than in Tennessee. Of the sites that I visited in Ohio, however, abolitionism was the only reform movement mentioned. It played a smaller role than I had anticipated, but the inclusion of women's work in abolition led to an increase in the substantive mentions of white women and an increase in the overall representation of African American women. Two other social movements, female education and religion, were the primary reform movements represented in historic house museums in both Tennessee and Ohio. My hypothesis to explain why reform movements do not play a larger role in historic site interpretation is that much of women's reform work is seen as work being done "outside" the home and is therefore not something mentioned on a tour of a house museum. Female education and religion, both tied more closely to the home, are more comfortable topics for interpretation. Mostly focusing on reform movements that can more easily be tied to the home and white women's traditional roles, however, creates a false equivalence, as men's work outside the home is nearly universally mentioned.

Historians break down women of this era into various groups. First, there is the great 'Southern lady,' a monolithic identity well-researched and written about, with near universal agreement on her qualifications of being white, wealthy, educated, and a slave owner. Her polar opposite in the South is her maid: black, enslaved, and usually uneducated in the classical sense. Both have been

well represented in the historiographic record of antebellum women, with new research on enslaved women being especially compelling and prominent. This dichotomy is near-universally present in Tennessee historic house museums as well, owing mostly to the fact that the nearly all the historic house museums visited for this study were homes of the wealthy elite.

Historians examine Northern women in a different, more complex way. Northern women are not treated as monolithically as their Southern counterparts but are instead analyzed according to their race/class, geographic region, or benevolent work. The topic that most informs this study's analysis is women's benevolent work, specifically suffrage, temperance, abolition, education, and religion. These topics are organized here in descending order of importance to interpretation, meaning suffrage and temperance are not discussed in Ohio historic house museums, but abolition, education, and religion are included in their interpretation.

Carol Lasser and Stacey M. Robertson in *Antebellum Women: Private, Public, Partisan*, make a sweeping effort to examine all the women of this era. Phase 1 of their study features plantation mistresses, enslaved mothers, working Northern women, Northern activists in both suffrage and temperance, religious women in both areas, and free women of color, with passing mentions of Native women. This expansive historiography shows how complicated it is to represent

all women of this era, and how blurry the line between public and private spheres really was.¹

Anne Firor-Scott's article "Historians Construct the Southern Woman" in *Making the Invisible Woman Visible*, gives a brief overview of the historiography of Southern women. While largely tying into the trends of Southern history, Scott emphasized that the history of Southern women was closely related to the 'myth-making' tradition of Southern history. As a Southerner herself, she speaks from experience, stating "We southerners, perhaps more than other Americans, enjoy making up stories about ourselves, and in the process we have created an array of mythical characters."² Principally they are the lady, the black mammy, and the poor white woman, although she states that there were "a host of all-but invisible women black and white" who managed to keep the South running relatively smoothly.³ The first two, the lady and the black mammy, are unfortunately the ones that come to mind most readily in examining the representation of Southern womanhood in historic house museums. The poor white woman, like the host of other women, is invisible, as most of these historic houses were homes of the wealthy white elite.

Kennedy's *Born Southern* focuses almost exclusively on elite white women and their enslaved servants and their maternal experiences. The crux of

¹ Caroline Lasser and Stacey M. Robertson, *Antebellum Women: Private, Public, Partisan*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010).

² Anne Firor Scott, "Historians Construct the Southern Woman" *Making the Invisible Woman Visible* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 243.

³ Scott, 244

Kennedy's study is that when the birthing room was female-centered, with mother only attended by female relatives and her female enslaved servants, it created a brief microcosm of equality, that was only eradicated outside of the birthing room when societal pressures began again. In the antebellum South, motherhood was treated as a vocation ordained by God. This idealization spilled over into political rhetoric as well, creating a uniquely Southern mother identity, exclusively for white women. Despite the idealization of motherhood, young white women were well aware of the risks to their health and well-being that childbirth brought. They used the language of illness to describe pregnancy, acknowledging the tensions between the idealized mother and the very real dangers they faced to achieve that ideal.⁴ As such, there were all manner of methods to limit pregnancy. Enslaved women were charged with the specific crime of infanticide, which Kennedy notes was construed as an overt act of rebellion against their masters as well as what the masters thought of as a sign of Africans being lower on the evolutionary ladder and in need of a civilizing force.⁵

Within the birthing room, skill could override racial tensions. Women wanted to be safe above all, so it did not matter if the midwife was enslaved, Native, or poor, as long as she was skilled. Until the middle-late nineteenth century, midwifery was the exclusive realm of women, the professionalization began in the mid-century, right before the Civil War. White mothers were

⁴ V. Lynn Kennedy, *Born Southern: Childbirth, Motherhood, and Social Networks in the Old South* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 45.

⁵ Kennedy, 29-30.

frequently given long recovery times to regain their strength, reinforcing ideas of white female delicacy, while black mothers were expected to resume work as soon as possible after giving birth and to continue working for as long as possible. Doctors and masters alike believed that those of African descent were stronger and thus abler to withstand the rigors of childbirth, along the lines of animals rather than people. While their white mistresses could plainly see that was not the case, only in very rare cases did they attempt to intercede on their slaves' behalf.

The idealization of motherhood in the South was exclusive to white women, but black women had other stereotypes to contend with: they were either unfit mothers to their own children, or 'mammies' that were the perfect mothering influence for white children. Walking this tightrope of a line was difficult for the white masters/mistresses to reconcile, to say nothing of what the enslaved women themselves thought. Kennedy consults Works Progress Administration Slave Narratives to give a deeper idea of what those women thought about their lot in life, so her resources are not always skewed toward white women, even though there are issues with the accuracy of these records, she has at least made an attempt to include what enslaved women thought of their own motherhood into the narrative.⁶

Interestingly, historians of Southern womanhood hit upon a theme nearly universally portrayed in historic house museums of both Tennessee and Ohio: motherhood and family. In this section of academic research vs. public

⁶ Ibid

interpretation, the result is the same. Historians recognized that motherhood and family were of critical importance to women of this era, and public historians frequently portray that in the selected historic house museums. The field research for this study, along with research conducted by Dr. Shrum at other institutions, both show that women are frequently referred to in a lineage/genealogical role, wife/mother/sister in addition to references to material culture.⁷ While not a perfect system, the lineage/genealogical category shows that women are valued for their connections to family, rightly or wrongly.

⁷ Rebecca Shrum, “The Matrix for Understanding and Expanding Coverage of Race and Gender in Historic Site Interpretation” (presentation, OZ Arts Nashville, Nashville, Tennessee, April 28, 2016).

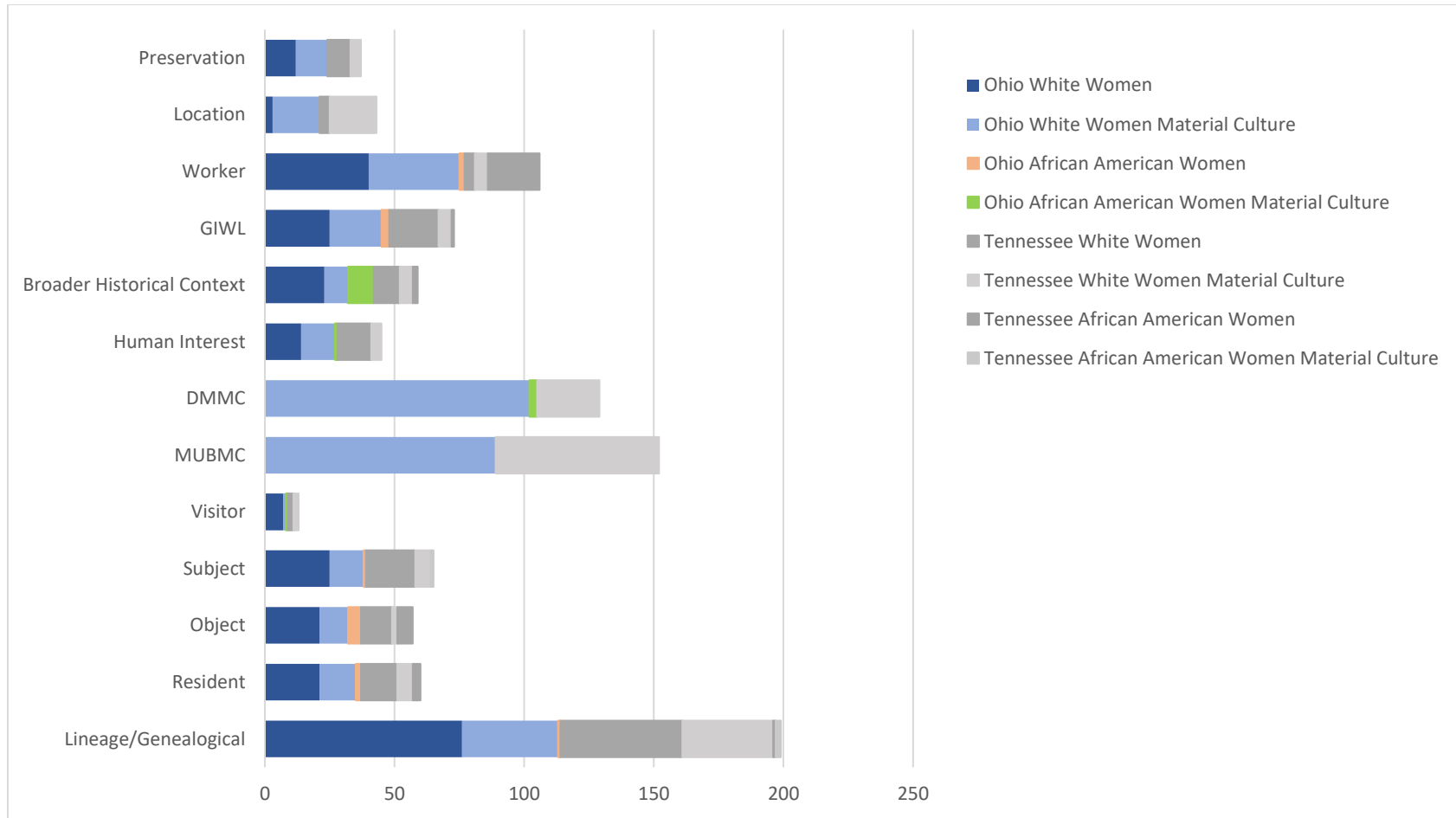


Figure 12: Comparison of Ohio and Tennessee Antebellum Sites (25) Across all Gender Matrix Categories

Figure 12 lays out the disparity in both states in interpreting African American women. While Tennessee has more mentions of African Americans (depicted in orange tones) cumulatively (37 total mentions), the bulk of those mentions come from the worker category, showing that most sites do talk about African Americans as enslaved people in some context. Ohio sites mention African American women less, but the mentions are spread out more in comparison (28 mentions total, depicted in green tones), where they are present in all but three Gender Matrix categories: Maker, User, Buyer of Material Culture (MUBMC), Location, and Preservation.

Noralee Frankel in *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in Civil War Era Mississippi*, published over twenty years ago, recognized another pattern in archival sources that is borne out by data generated by fieldwork for this study: the unsexing of slavery experiences. Enslaved men and women worked cotton fields in equal numbers, and *they* also set to other tasks outside of the fields in similar numbers. Despite this, on large plantations enslaved women were the primary caretakers of the white family as well as the primary caretakers of their own families, placing a unique burden on enslaved women to maintain two families at once.¹ The majority of historic house museums in the South were larger working plantations, and all use passive, gender-neutral language to refer to

¹ Noralee Frankel, *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in the Civil War Era Mississippi* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1999), 5-6; John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

the experience of slavery, unsexing a gendered institution. Using gender-neutral language to describe a gendered time then erases women from that experience.

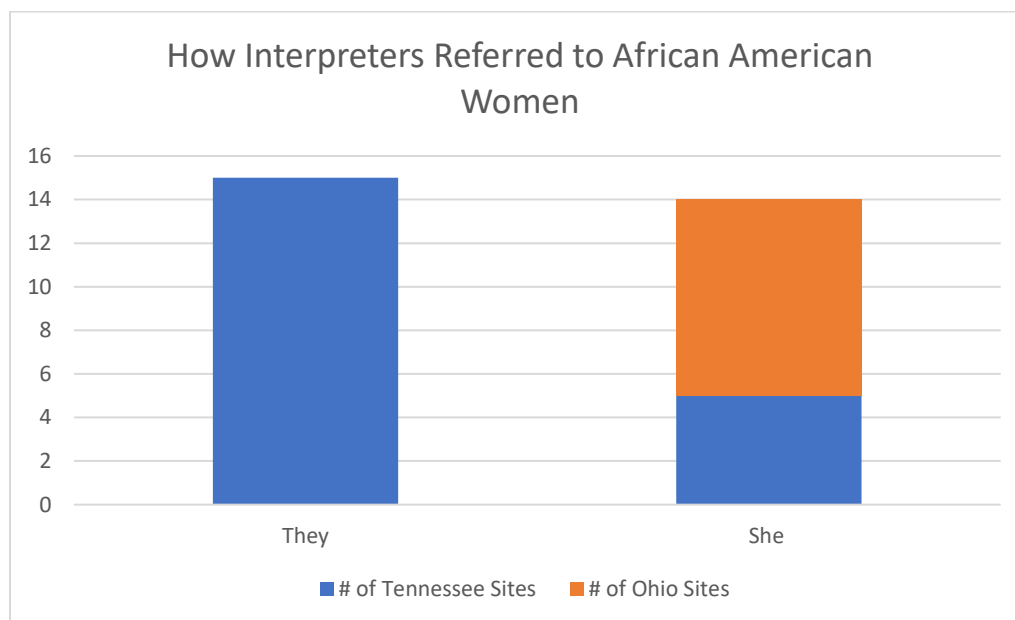


Figure 13: Chart comparing the number of Tennessee and Ohio sites whose interpreters use gender-neutral language to refer to African American women's work

Language is part of the myriad of strategies that Kristin L. Gallas and James DeWolf Perry suggest in *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites* to create a more accurate representation of slavery at historic sites. Vital to the other strategies presented in their work, language is the crux of how public historians communicate our ideas to the world, and we know those words have power. Galls and Perry recommend using person first language when describing historical actors, for example: enslaved woman vs. slave. Being enslaved is a

condition, not their entirety of being.² The same is true for identifying women in the historical record and in the historic house, stating that “she” was the one responsible for such work places women, white or black, back into the narrative. Interpreters, in both Tennessee and Ohio, consistently used ‘they’ in reference to domestic staff, either free or enslaved. Placing women, especially those all too frequently invisible working women (enslaved or free), back into the narrative, is critical to this study (Fig. 13).

Both Julie Roy Jeffery and Lori D. Ginzburg use their works, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism* and *Women and the Work of Benevolence* respectively, to acknowledge women’s work in reform movements. These two historians, as well as others like Natasha Kirsten Kraus and Janet Zollinger Giele, all recognize that women were the primary drivers of reform movements in the North and later in the Progressive Era southern women played important roles in reform movements. Ginzburg in particular, reckoned with the divisions with the various reform movements and attempts to analyze the movement as a whole, a monumental task as the movement’s women were involved in were as numerous as women themselves. Ginzburg does this through examining, not individual movements, but the mechanics of the movements: business and political activity, fundraising, paying wages, legal maneuvers and the like. From this, Ginzburg was able to parse their motivation in this work to what she termed “benevolent

² Kristin L. Gallas and James DeWolf Perry, *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 93.

femininity.” Through this lens, she created “an analysis of sisterhood which could undermine male dominance, in defining the middle class and in guarding property.”³

Support or opposition for suffrage is another characteristic for historians. The advent of the women’s suffrage movement is in the middle of the nineteenth century and is one of the defining moments for the century, right next to the Civil War. The push for ballot equality began much earlier and is again dominated by wealthy, white women.

Corrine McConnaughy notes in *The Women’s Suffrage Movement: A Reassessment* that despite the relative class and racial homogeneity of the first women’s rights movements, they were far from politically aligned on all issues. Many within the movement were divided along partisan lines, relationships with male politicians, and support for other political causes, most notably abolition, and the treatment of their African American sisters and brothers.⁴

Suffrage and temperance were two sides of the same reform coin for many elite, white women in the North. Just four years after the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony founded the New York State Women’s Temperance Society.⁵ While the formal Women’s Christian

³ Lori D. Ginzburg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the 19th-century United States* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), 9.

⁴ Corrine McConnaughy, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement: A Reassessment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 51.

⁵ “Abolition, Women’s Rights, and Temperance Movements,” Women’s Rights National Historic Park New York, Last updated: September 20, 2016

Temperance Union is founded outside of the scope of this study (1874), it is important to note that first rumblings of the temperance movement started back in the 1820s, with preachers like Charles Finney beginning the call for temperance. By 1831, there were 24 separate organizations calling for temperance reform.⁶

In *Two Paths to Women's Equality: Temperance, Suffrage and the Origins of Modern Feminism*, Giele stated that temperance and suffrage evolved from the earlier social movements, most notably antislavery and abolition.⁷ Both types of early feminism, the traditionally feminine and domestic feminism of the early temperance activists and the more stereotypically masculine and public feminism of suffragists, were necessary for women to push forward in the struggle for equal rights and equal treatment.⁸ Despite the necessity of both of these feminisms, only one is portrayed in historic house museums: the feminine and domestic, and that feminism is *not* tied to activism around temperance.

Many historians have argued that the temperance movement was a backlash against increased immigration in the nineteenth century.⁹ It is true that many temperance crusaders were white and native-born, and they targeted new

<https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/abolition-womens-rights-and-temperance-movements.htm>.

⁶ "Women Led the Temperance Charge," Prohibition: An Interactive History, Accessed December 4, 2019, <http://prohibition.themobmuseum.org/the-history/the-road-to-prohibition/the-temperance-movement/>.

⁷ Janet Zollinger Giele, *Two Paths to Women's Equality* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 28.

⁸ Giele. xii

⁹ W. J. Rorabaugh "Alcohol, Consumption of, per Capita (United States)" in *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, eds. Jack S. Blocker, Jr., David M. Fahey, and Ian R. Tyrrell (Denver, CO: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2003), 33-34.

immigrants for their increased drinking and, in their eyes, lasciviousness. This may have been a factor for some, but for others, like Carrie Nation, personal experience with alcohol-induced abuse and religion were the driving factors behind her crusade against drink.¹⁰

This issue affected everyone, but it was mainly women who did not typically work for wages that took up this cause. These women were from the burgeoning middle class. While temperance certainly did not create the middle class, it did have a hand in shaping its ideology that women should not work, but take up a charity close to home, raise good citizens, and set an example to their husbands, children, and neighbors for their upright moral being.¹¹ These was also an important movement for white women because it allowed them to enter the public sphere, as the moral compass of the family.

The far-reaching consequences of the suffrage and temperance movements are perhaps partly the reason why they are so thoroughly examined today. There were seventy-two years between the Seneca Falls Convention and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, and even longer between the beginning of the temperance movement and the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment. Women's involvement in these two crusades, for vote and for temperance, are perhaps the hallmark of the Progressive Era reform movement era, and the beginning of a feminist movement.

¹⁰ Carry A. Nation, *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation* (1905 rpt., Champaign, IL: Project Gutenberg, 2006) <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1485/pg1485-images.html>.

¹¹ *ibid*

It is reasonable to assume that, because these issues so dominate historiography on antebellum and postbellum women, that sites would take that scholarship and incorporate those issues into historic house museums of that era. This is not the case. Only in the William Howard Taft Birthplace is suffrage mentioned, as his wife Helen “Nellie” Heron Taft was the first First Lady to support suffrage, in 1909. Often the issues that are presented as important to women of the time are centered around family: education and religion. Even if these women weren’t involved in reform movements, giving voice to that silence is important as well.

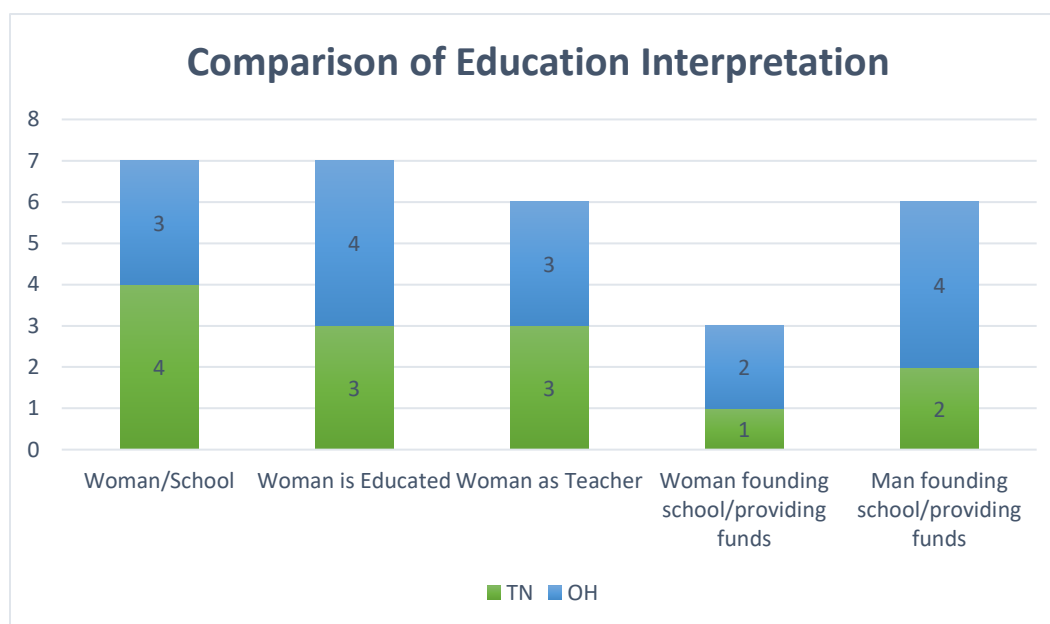


Figure 14: Comparison of Female Education Interpretation between Tennessee and Ohio

Female education is interpreted far more than either temperance or suffrage. This does not mean that sites do an excellent job of interpreting the intricacies of female education in the antebellum period. Much of the time, sites

will state the woman was “educated” and might mention where they attained their education. (Fig. 14). Very rarely do sites tie female education to creating networks of female friendships, which then might entangle their respective husbands in business or political dealings. Only about half the houses in Ohio mentioned female education at all, with a slightly smaller number of houses in Tennessee doing the same (14 to 12).

Other historians have already examined how vital these academies were in creating lifelong friendships and in influencing politics writ large. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Anya Jabour in “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America” and *Scarlett’s Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* respectively, both analyze the same idea and the same class of women in their respective works. Smith-Rosenberg analyzed the friendship of women from a wide range of locales and religions; however, they represent what she believed to be a “literate middle class.”¹² Smith-Rosenberg also examined how their friendships evolved from school age to old age. Writing in the mid-1970s, her main goal was to bring attention to a critically understudied subset of women’s history. She analyzed how the culture of the nineteenth century encouraged intense female friendships, that other historians assumed also had a sexual component as well. Smith-Rosenberg posited that while some relationships might have been physical, the more important part is the deep

¹² Carrol Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual” *Signs* 1, No. 1 (Autumn 1975): 3.

emotional connection forged by the women who occupied the same class and social sphere.¹³

Jabour takes Smith-Rosenberg's early ideas and adds another layer of complexity to them. While agreeing that female friends form the bedrock of women's lives in the antebellum period, Jabour focuses more on specifically Southern and young women, rather than tracing their relationships throughout their lives. In doing this, she makes age an analytical category, in addition to region and gender. The crux of Jabour's work is that while there were not many ways for elite young women to form their own ideas, they did rebel against the prevailing cultural attitudes and create their own particular subculture.¹⁴

Once girls began to attend to the various female academies that proliferated during the nineteenth century, they formed intensely close friendships with those of their same sex. While at these academies, girls received both an academic education as well as a domestic one, more focused on ladylike behavior. Based on her study, Jabour posits that the girls who prized their academic education over the domestic one formed part of this rebellious youth that was aware of their limited opportunities because of their sex, instead of their abilities. Jabour calls the intense female friendships formed at these academies romantic friendships and evokes much the same ideas as Smith-Rosenberg, the same romantic language is employed and as well as what Jabour calls "erotic"

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

language. While she doesn't give much space to the deep analysis of these relationships, Jabour does emphasize how important these friends were throughout their lives, not just during school.¹⁵

Connecting them to the wider world of politics, albeit in a slightly earlier time period, is Catherine Allgor in *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government*. She states quite plainly, that elite white women in Washington, just as “other women on farms and in shops, they [the women of Washington D.C.] participated in the family business – in this case however, the family business was politics.”¹⁶ These women acted as gatekeepers: putting on social events and parties and inviting those that would help their male relatives move farther in politics. What Allgor fails to include is that many of these women might have known each other from a previous life... in their academies. This was certainly the case in Tennessee, where many elite white women went to the Salem Female Academy in North Carolina: Sarah Childress Polk, Eliza Jane Ramsey, and Catherine Dickson Williams, to name a few. Discussing the male head of household's political activity then gives an opening to include female heads of household in the political discussion.

Nearly every historic house I visited had at least one sampler displayed, either by the primary woman interpreted there or by another woman. Very rarely did interpreters take the time to discuss samplers as a showcase of female

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 1.

education, or how education differed from today. One site that did is Oaklands Mansion, located in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Oaklands provides a self-guided tour with text panels set up in each room that give information about the Maney family, what the room itself was used for, and any unique objects that can be found there. In the Girls' Bedroom, the text panel partially reads:

Oaklands is fortunate to have several fine examples of stitched samplers made by young ladies in Middle Tennessee. Girls learned to sew when they were very young. A sampler is a piece of embroidery or cross-stitching produced as a demonstration or a test of skill in needlework. It often includes the alphabet, figures, motifs, decorative borders and sometimes the name of the person who created it. Samplers were often exhibited for Trustees and Board members when the school term ended at young lady's academies. Dr. Maney served as a Trustee for the Murfreesboro Female Academy in the 1830s.¹⁷

This simple explanation of the utility of samplers provides much needed context to what most museums use as a wall decoration. Other houses, like Rock Castle (Hendersonville, Tennessee) tie samplers to female education, and Ramsey House (Knoxville, Tennessee) also tie samplers to creative expression and a desire for immortality. In Ohio, three of the homes mention the samplers on the tour. Some, like Shaker Historical Museum (Shaker Heights, Ohio) and Dunham Tavern (Cleveland, Ohio) use samplers to point out who made them. Dunham Tavern did this frequently, as they had six samplers on display. Simon Perkins Stone Mansion, like Ramsey House, used the opportunity to examine the creativity women put into their samplers, as well as mention how competitive women were in the creation of these pieces of art.

¹⁷ The Girls' Bedroom, Text panel at Oaklands Mansion, February 1, 2019.

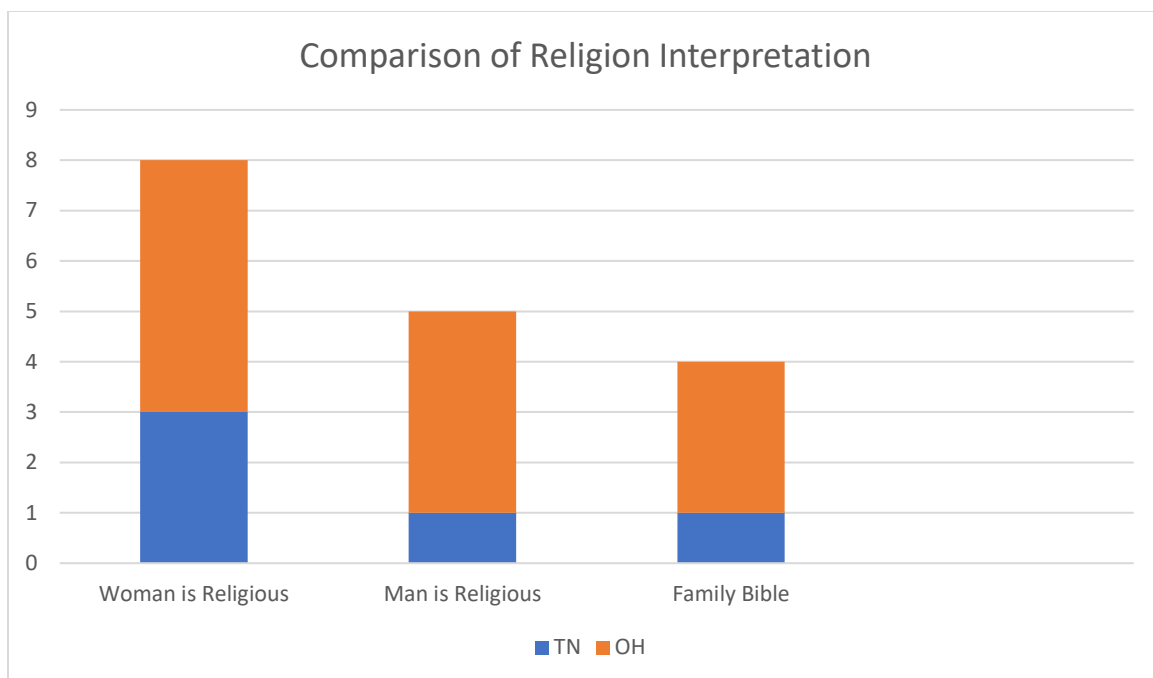


Figure 15: Comparison of Religion Interpretation in Tennessee and Ohio

Religion is another secondary theme that emerged, particularly in Ohio. Ohio had a prevalence of religious separatists in the antebellum period, many of whom set up their own communities, like Zoar and Shaker Heights. These areas and villages are infused with references to women as workers and as religious workers at that. Each group settled in a different area of Ohio, and for different reasons, so there is no unifying reason why Ohio had an outsized representation of these religious separatists. There are also far more sites that have any references to religion in Ohio than there are in Tennessee (Fig. 15, eight sites in Ohio vs. two sites in Tennessee).

The Zoarites are an interesting case themselves. They were a group of Lutheran separatists that left the Wuttenberg region of Germany in the early nineteenth century. These separatists eventually settled in Tuscarawas County,

Ohio and named their settlement Zoar, after the Biblical town that Lot fled to after leaving Sodom.¹⁸ These settlers did not set out to create a communal living village, but after the particularly harsh winter of 1818, the villagers decided to own everything communally. Interestingly, both men and women signed the founding documents in April 1819, and women were not specifically prohibited from holding elected office, though none were elected.¹⁹ This could suggest a social more than legal prohibition to holding office. During the forty-odd years between the founding of the commune and the Civil War, Zoar prospered economically. They were entirely self-sufficient and managed to sell extra supplies to surrounding communities.²⁰

Zoarites were opposed to war, which was one reason they left their Germanic homeland.²¹ The Civil War posed a problem for them. The townspeople were strict abolitionists, yet pacifists. Some two dozen of the town's young men volunteered for Union Army service, but still struggled to reconcile this with their peacekeeping beliefs. When the government called for a draft, Zoarites received a monetary exemption: the ability to pay money in exchange for one of their draftees. Letters from Zoarite soldiers home curiously did not seem to struggle with this moral dilemma, but more so with describing battle scenes.²²

¹⁸ "Zoarites," *Ohio History Central*, February 4, 2017, <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Zoarites>.

¹⁹ William Alfred Hinds, *American Communities and Co-Operative Colonies* (Chicago: Charles Kerr & Company, 1908), 106.

²⁰ Hinds, 108.

²¹ Emilius Oviatt Randall, *History of Zoar society, from its commencement to its conclusion: A Sociological Study in Communism* (Columbus, Ohio: Press of Fred J. Meer, 1904), 15

²² Larry Kreiser, "Review of *Zoar in the Civil War*," *Journal of American Cultures* Vol. 31, No.1 (March 2008): 140.

The Zoarites peacefully un-incorporated their communal organization in 1898. A large minority in the late 1880s began to agitate for private property, and by the late 1890s, the majority agreed. The town hired three independent commissioners to assess the land and assets and divide it among the remaining members. Each member received their own area of land, and approximately \$2,500.²³ The townspeople also decided to preserve the church, school, town hall, and other buildings for posterity, and they are still standing to this day. The entire downtown is a historic district, named the Historic Zoar Village, and is affiliated with the Ohio History Connection.

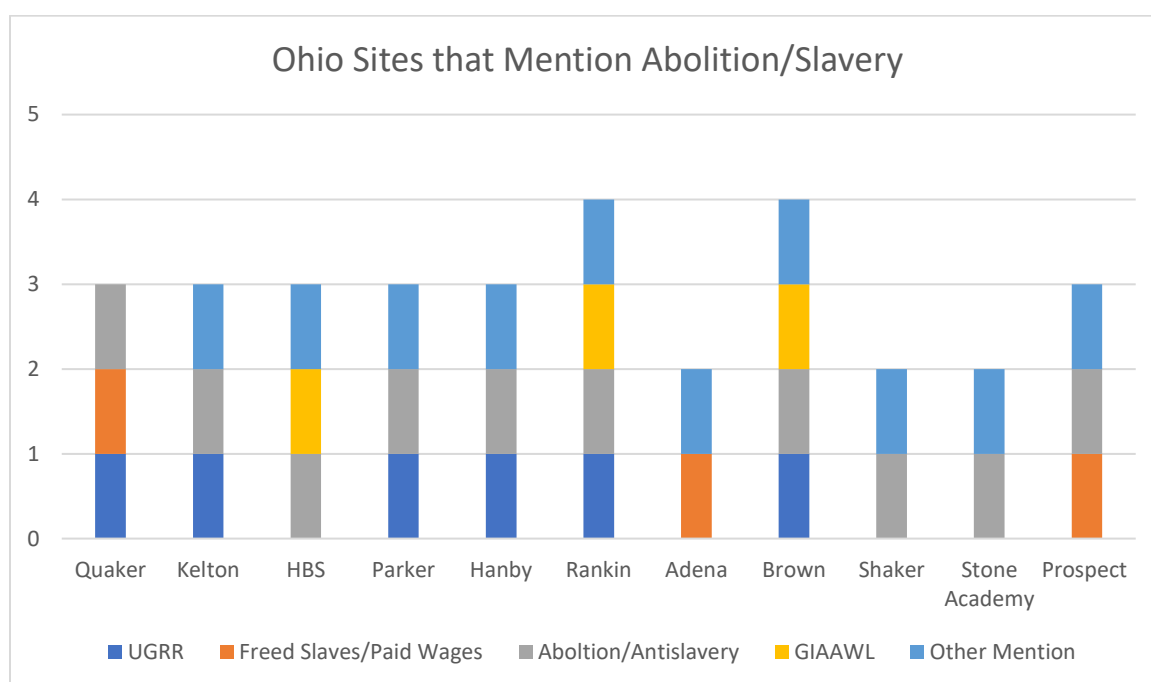


Figure 16: Comparison of Ohio Sites that Mention Abolition/Slavery

²³ Randall, 79.

It is not surprising that many sites in Ohio do not mention abolition or slavery in their interpretation. Of the ones that do, the people who are primarily interpreted there are almost always mentioned as either being staunch abolitionists or at least holding antislavery views (Fig. 16). The only house where this is not the case is Adena Mansion and Gardens (Chillicothe, Ohio), where the interpreter simply states that when the owner, Thomas Worthington, moved to the Ohio Territory, he freed his slaves and hired them to work on the estate. Worthington came to the area to claim his guardian, Col. William Darke's, Revolutionary War land grant and it is mentioned that in addition to finding the land fertile and pleasantly located, he liked that there was no slavery in the territory.

The other ten sites that discuss abolition can be further analyzed by those that allegedly participated in the Underground Railroad. Some are well-documented stations, such as John P. Parker, Reverend John Rankin, John Brown, and Benjamin Hanby's homes. Others are speculative, like Kelton House and the Quaker Yearly Meetinghouse.

Kelton House (Columbus, Ohio), however, does give a gendered interpretation of white women's role in the Underground Railroad. Because many of the women's husbands who frequented Sophia Kelton's home were watched closely by authorities after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the women became the primary drivers of the Underground Railroad in Columbus. Popular opinion held that women would not be smart or sophisticated enough to carry out a secret operation like the Underground Railroad, and that if they did

manage to pull it off, they would gossip about it and the secret would leak. The Kelton House offers proof that that was not the case. One female freedom seeker, as various interpreters called runaway slaves, was named Martha Hataway and stayed with the Keltons for ten years. Sophia Kelton found her hiding in the bushes in the backyard, incredibly sick, and nursed her back to health. When she was again healthy, Hataway decided to stay with the Keltons. She later married a free man of color that the Keltons had hired to do carpentry work, Thomas Lawrence, and they married in the family's parlor on October 29, 1874. The Lawrences later named their first son Arthur Kelton Lawrence, to honor the family who the saved the life of his mother. While the public historians at Kelton House have no direct evidence that their site was a regular station on the Underground Railroad, their logic is that if the Keltons were willing to harbor one freedom seeker, chances are likely they did it on a semi-regular basis.

Public historians with OHC at the Quaker Yearly Meetinghouse (Mt. Pleasant, Ohio) have another slightly different challenge to interpret. Most Quakers were antislavery, but there is more nuance given to the antislavery movement here, as not all were activists within the movement. Mt. Pleasant was a hub of the abolitionist movement in the 1830s, with many antislavery tracts published in the town. While some Quakers were active in the Underground Railroad, as a group their most frequent contribution to the antislavery movement would be to attend slave auctions, buy older slaves and free them in Ohio. The nuance provided here of passive resistance (re: working within the system to undercut it) versus active resistance (re: helping freedom seekers on their journey

north), is an important part of the broader historical context that is not provided elsewhere in Ohio public interpretation, except in academic works.

Another very stark difference between the sites is those that offer a gendered interpretation of African American women's lives and those that do not. The two of the three that do are also documented stations on the Underground Railroad, and the third is the Harriet Beecher Stowe House (Cincinnati, Ohio). The presence of both the Underground Railroad and abolition has a positive correlational effect on the presence of a gendered interpretation of African American women's lives. Put more simply, Ohio sites tell more stories about African American women as individuals, especially when they are on their way to freedom. This triumphant narrative is perhaps *why* a gendered interpretation for African American women's lives is more common in Ohio than in Tennessee during the antebellum period. It is hard to tell a happy story about an African American female slave that does not ring false. Some public historians, especially in the south, may not want to take a risk to tell an unhappy story, if the recent reviews about the tour redesign at Monticello in Virginia and McLeod Plantation in South Carolina are any indication of public reaction.²⁴

²⁴ Hannah Knowles, "As plantations talk more honestly about slavery, some visitors are pushing back" *Washington Post*, September 8, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/09/08/plantations-are-talking-more-about-slavery-grappling-with-visitors-who-talk-back/>.

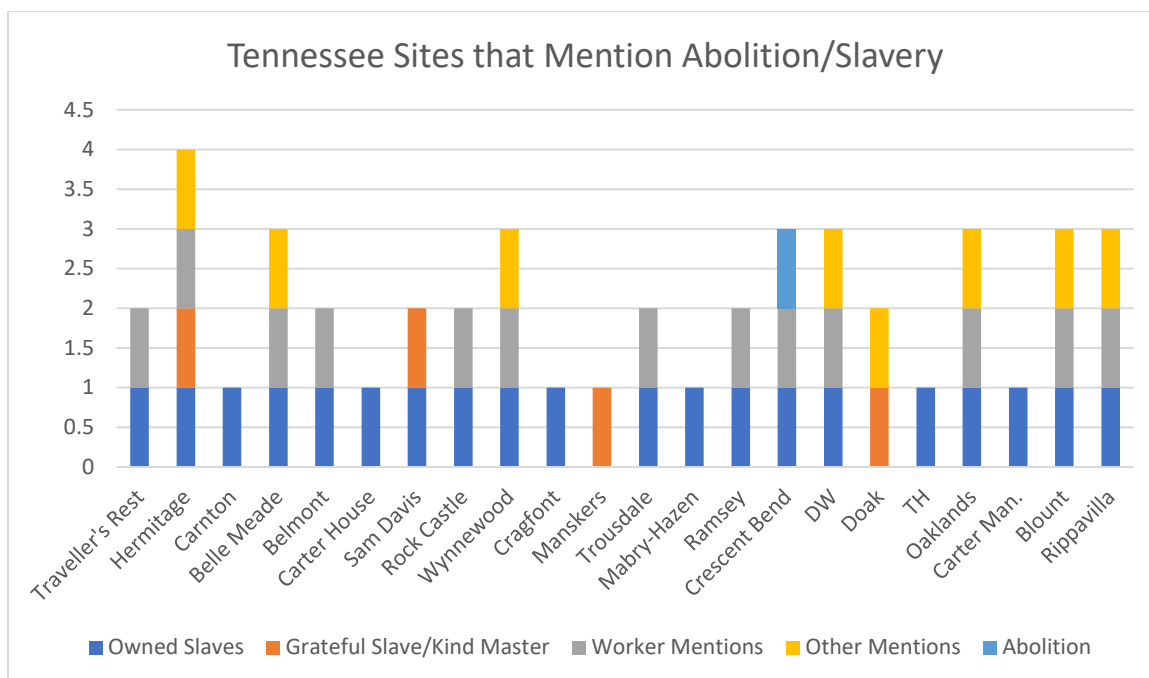


Figure 17: Comparison Tennessee Sites that Mention Abolition/Slavery

In comparison, sites in Tennessee mention slavery far more often than those in Ohio (Fig. 17). More than two-thirds (22 out of 29) at least acknowledge that the family owned slaves. Thankfully, very few of them continue to perpetuate the “grateful slave/kind master” trope that was prevalent before the 2000s, best examined by Eichstedt and Small in *Representations of Slavery*.²⁵ Continuing that promising trend, sites that acknowledge the family as slave owners also specifically mention enslaved people as workers and other ways throughout the house, although the connection to the family’s wealth and the enslaved labor is tenuous at best. If sites explicitly connect a family’s wealth to enslaved people’s

²⁵ Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003).

labor, then it makes clearer the fact the family's wealth, and all the trappings that come with it, was only possible because of slavery.

The analysis of slavery rhetoric shows progress in the interpretation of slavery at historic house museums in Tennessee. It is by no means an endorsement of the current public interpretation writ large. None of the sites in Tennessee give a gendered interpretation of African American women's lives, either individually or in general. While some sites do name individual enslaved women in their interpretation, there is hardly any discussion about them in a meaningful manner. The information listed about them are usually their duties or for how much money they were bought or sold.

One site shows promise: Dickson Williams Mansion in Greeneville, Tennessee. One of the case studies that will be analyzed more closely in chapter three, Dickson Williams Mansion worked with Chick History, Inc. in the winter of 2019 to update their interpretation to tell better stories about women, including the stories of African American women who lived at the plantation. Their willingness to incorporate new stories to their history, with a board run primarily by white descendants, exemplifies the sea change happening in public history. Sites must make the choice themselves to incorporate diverse voices into their interpretation. Historians know they are there but lecturing to those interpreters about how and where they should insert those stories is not a way to share authority. The board and interpreters at Dickson Williams Mansion made the conscious choice to tell a well-rounded story about life at their property, and other

sites can and should do the same, if only to get an increase of patrons and more diverse patrons to their sites.

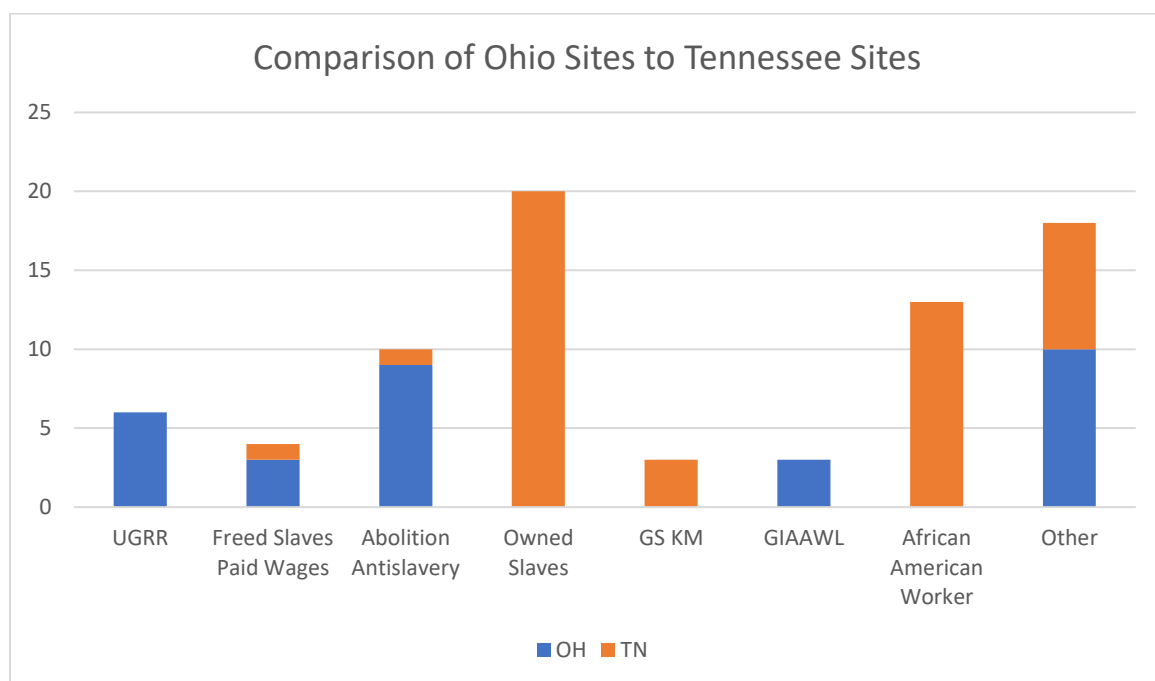


Figure 18: Comparison of Ohio and Tennessee Sites that Mention Abolition/Slavery

Compared to the cumulative mentions of women at all early statehood period sites, mentions of women in the antebellum period either remained similar or decreased. It is especially prominent in the lineage/genealogical, worker, and material culture categories. This is surprising as the total number of houses that interpret the antebellum period increased significantly compared to the early statehood period (26 to 45). All other categories remained stagnant, even with the increase in sites.

In analyzing the differences between sites in Ohio and Tennessee in the antebellum period, it is obvious that slavery is the dividing line. Sites in Ohio are

more likely to have a gendered interpretation of African American women in their public tours, while sites in Tennessee focus on practicalities of slavery rather than individual stories. (Fig. 18). While Tennessee sites should incorporate a more nuanced view of slavery and of the individuals that made up much of the people who lived on their sites, it is an individual site's decision to change the interpretation that drastically. But it is one that they must make in order to stay viable in these challenging economic times for historic house museums.

CHAPTER IV: A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE INTERPRETATION

This chapter will examine six case study sites, three from Ohio and three from Tennessee, that all have both substantive and stereotypical representations of nineteenth century women. To make this study useful to historic house museum practitioners, especially those with a limited budget, the case studies here are focused on those houses that had a yearly budget less than \$250,000 as of the most recent available tax information.¹ In addition to these six sites, I also provide some general advice on how to integrate more substantive information about women into public facing interpretation.

For each site, the first goal is to explore the overall history of the historic house and its inhabitants, based on both the tour given and outside research. The second objective is to apply the Shrum Gender Matrix Report for each site. Lastly, the third goal will spotlight the mentions of women at the sites, pointing out opportunities for improvement as well as examples of excellence. By providing the both the history from the tour and outside sources, as well as the Matrix report and what scholarship already tells us about nineteenth century women, these case studies of historic house museums can create a model for more substantive and realistic interpretation of nineteenth century women.

¹ The majority of the information came from ProPublica, while some information was obtained directly from sites. All of the tax information used for deciding where the sites should fall came from either 2017 or 2018.

In Ohio, all the sites examined are owned by the Ohio History Connection (OHC), but they are administered in partnership with local organizations. They are Hanby House (Westerville), the Harriet Beecher Stowe House (Cincinnati), and Adena Mansion and Gardens (Chillicothe). In each of these sites' public facing interpretation, they give some substantive information about a woman or women. These sites were chosen because they gave some information but did not necessarily give a complete picture of an individual women's life, creating an opportunity for more historical research as well as modifying interpretation to make a woman-focused approach.

The sites in Tennessee are Dickson-Williams Mansion (Greeneville), Mabry-Hazen House (Knoxville), and Oaklands Mansion (Murfreesboro). Using the same criteria as Ohio, these sites all have references to women that are either substantive or brief. These mentions, whether they gave a complete portrait of a woman's life, or just a snippet, serve as studies of how to interpret complex historical ideas in a historic house museum.

Ohio Case Study One: Hanby House

Mission Statement: "The general purposes of the Society shall be the promotion of historical study and research in the history of the State of Ohio ("State") and the Community of Westerville ("Community"); the collection, collation, preservation, and publication of historical facts pertaining to the State and the Community; the dissemination of historical information of the State and the Community by means of programs, special newspaper articles, and cooperation

with the schools of the Community in the teaching of state and local history; the cooperation with the library or libraries of the Community in the up-building of separate Ohio and local history sections; the establishment of museums; and the marking of historical places of interest. The Society shall be a non-profit organization for educational and historical research purposes within the limitations set forth under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.”²

Originally built for Bishop William Hanby, Hanby House is best known as the childhood home of Benjamin Russell Hanby, a Methodist preacher and acclaimed songwriter of “Darling Nellie Gray” and “Up on the Housetop.” The interpreters at the Hanby House do an excellent job of interpreting the main people who lived at the house: Ann Miller Hanby and Kate Winter Hanby, the wives of Bishop Hanby and Benjamin respectively. William Hanby was a circuit preacher, and Benjamin was a teacher and circuit preacher at various points, but neither were home for long stretches of time. The interpreters acknowledge this disparity, letting the pre-tour video discuss the majority of the men’s lives, while the house tour takes a more holistic approach, incorporating the stories of people who lived and worked in the house.³

² Personal correspondence with Jeff Yoest, president of Westerville Historical Society, March 20, 2020.

³ Hanby House, Westerville, Ohio, Field visit May 18, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

Because William Hanby was a well-known religious leader in the area, and his son later became famous as well, much is known about their family. The Hanbys were ardent abolitionists and their home is a documented site on the Network to Freedom, also known as the Underground Railroad.⁴ As such, the interpreters infused the tour with stories of freedom seekers, especially that of Joe Selby, the inspiration behind the song “Darling Nellie Gray.” Joe Selby was a freedom seeker, and when he arrived at the Hanby House, he was too sick to move to the next station. He told William Hanby about the woman he loved, Nellie Gray, who was sold further south. He wished to make enough money to buy her freedom, but he died at the Hanby House before he could. This story inspired Benjamin Hanby to write the song “Darling Nellie Gray” and it was an incredibly popular song during the Civil War, sung by both Union and Confederate soldiers alike, although the Confederate soldiers changed lyrics and omitted verses with more oblique references to slavery.⁵

While “Darling Nellie Gray” was a huge success, Benjamin only received \$50 in royalties from the publisher. Cornelia Walker, his piano teacher, believed the song was very good and convinced him to send the song to a publisher. He did, but never heard back from the publisher. His sister, Anna, later heard the song playing in Columbus and convinced him to sue the publisher, because he

⁴Ibid; “Hanby House” Network to Freedom, *National Park Service*, Last updated: November 17, 2010, Accessed January 8, 2020,

https://www.nps.gov/subjects/ugrr/ntf_member/ntf_member_details.htm?SPFID=4091817&SPFterritory=NULL&SPFType=NULL&SPFKeywords=NULL.

⁵ Robert B. Waltz and David Engle, “Darling Nelly Gray,” *Folklorist*, Accessed January 8, 2020, http://www.folklorist.org/song/Darling_Nelly_Gray.

never received any royalties. The publisher paid Benjamin \$100, but half of it went to the lawyers. At every step in the story of “Darling Nellie Gray,” there is a woman behind the scenes. First Nellie Gray herself, then Cornelia Walker, and finally Anna Hanby. While Benjamin is remembered for composing the song, these women had as much to do with its success as he did.

Bishop William Hanby was one of the founders of Otterbein College, an institution of higher learning that from the beginning admitted men and women, white and black. The women were in the same program and classes as men at a time when colleges frequently admitted women in a segregated system. The first graduating class in 1857 was made up solely of women, one of whom later married Benjamin Hanby, Mary Katherine Winter.⁶

Kate Hanby, as Mary Katherine was commonly called, lived much longer than her husband. Benjamin died in 1867, at the age of thirty-three, while Kate lived until 1930, another sixty-seven years.⁷ She taught school in rural Illinois for many years, fighting with publishers about her husband’s legacy.⁸ She never remarried. Kate filled her life with learning, her children, and grandchildren, and her life is memorialized in the biography published by her son titled *The Widow*.

⁶ “Otterbein College,” *Ohio History Central*, Ohio History Connection, Accessed January 8, 2020 https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Otterbein_College.

⁷ David M., “Kathryn ‘Kate’ Winter Hanby” *Find A Grave Database*, Created: September 18, 2009, Accessed January 8, 2020, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/42095795/kathryn-hanby>.

⁸ Brainerd Hanby, “The Widow, A Leader in Women’s Education, Wife of the Song Writer, Author of Darling Nelly Gray; Experiences of Her Remarkable Life of Ninety-Seven Years” (1933) *Book Collection*, 10, 18-22, Accessed January 8, 2020, https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/archives_hanby/1.

She later moved to Los Angeles with her daughter's family, joining the Friday Morning Club, the oldest literary club in the city.⁹ She remained in touch with other alumni of Otterbein College, and received a beautifully engraved cane upon her ninetieth birthday, as the oldest living alum of Otterbein College.¹⁰

Kate Hanby did not live in the Hanby House for long, staying there only sporadically during her life. However, Ann Miller Hanby, Bishop William Hanby's wife and Benjamin's mother lived in the house (for how many years?). As the primary resident Ann, along with her eight children, was responsible for managing the house, children, as well as many freedom seekers who came through while her husband was away. Ann managed this through the help of the surrounding Westerville community. A deeply abolitionist and temperance-minded town, the women of Westerville were very active in helping on the Underground Railroad.¹¹ Ann would place roses in a vase in the front window every morning. The roses signified how many freedom seekers she was currently helping, wordlessly alerting other members of the community if she would need more food, clothing, shoes, and medicine.¹²

On the Hanby House tour, Ann's realm is the kitchen. The interpreter explained that the stove needed to be kept hot all day, so the boys would gather wood to keep the fire burning. Ann Hanby and her four daughters (Amanda,

⁹ Hanby, 38.

¹⁰ Hanby, 27.

¹¹ "Westerville, Ohio," *Ohio History Central*, Ohio History Connection. Accessed January 8, 2020, https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Westerville,_Ohio.

¹² Hanby House, Westerville, Ohio, Field visit May 18, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

Anna, Sarah “Jenny”, and Ruth “Lizzie”) would make a lot of breads, pies, and cakes, not just for the large family, but also for the freedom seekers, relatives, and visitors to the Hanby House. The interpreter also gave a demonstration of the multiple irons, showing the laborious process of ironing a skirt. The interpreters also had a collection of fashion magazines from the era, showing how Ann Hanby would copy some of the designs for her daughters, so they could look fashionable. The kitchen is also home to a brief explanation about the preservation of the home, where another woman Dacia Custer Shoemaker is featured (see Chapter Four).

These were the substantive stories from Hanby House that mention women in an active way. There were more mentions of women than just these few stories, either referring to specific objects within the house, or as tangential stories about other women. Below is Shrum Gender Matrix graph for Hanby House, as well as a list of all the mentions of women from both the tour and the video.

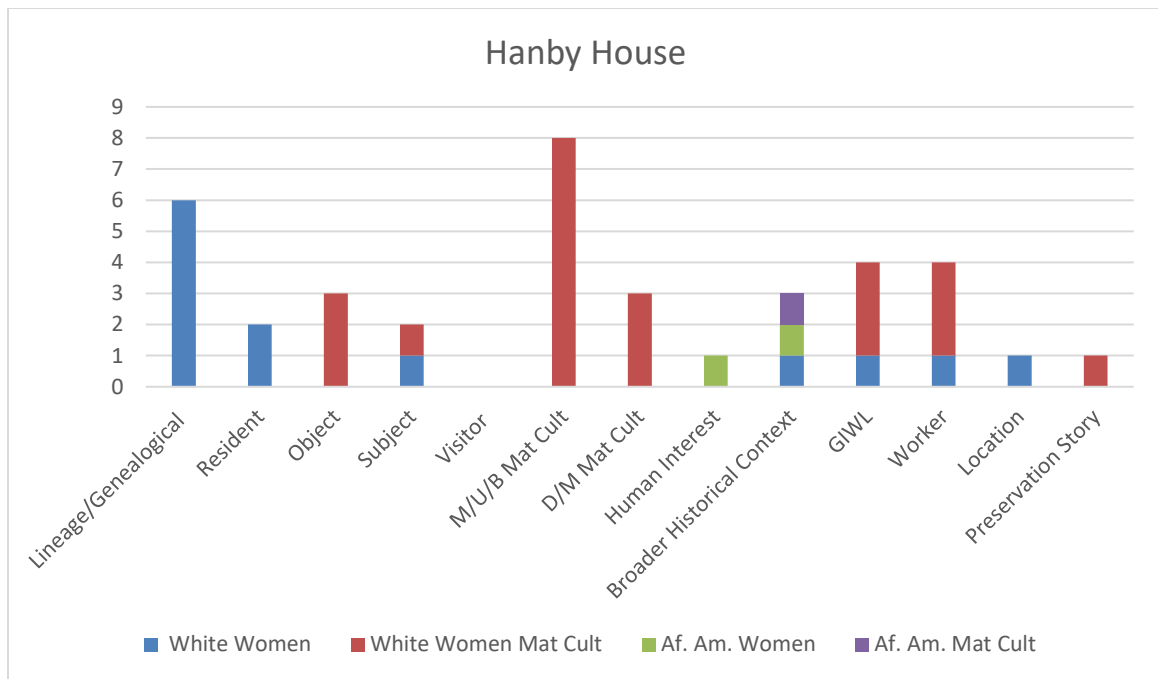


Figure 19: Shrum's Gender Matrix of Hanby House

Hanby House: Matrix Mentions Analysis

Introductory Video

Mention	Category
William Hanby marries Ann Taylor	Lineage/Genealogical
William and Ann have Ben	Lineage/Genealogical
Ann and Ben stay at home while William preaches on the circuit	Object
Nellie Gray story	Human Interest
Ms Cornelia Walker teaches Ben piano	Worker
Ben writes Darling Nellie Gray, sends to publisher at Walker's urging	Broader Historical Context
Sister Anne hears it playing somewhere and then Ben demands royalties	Object

Ben marries Mary Katherine Winter (Kate)	Lineage/Genealogical
Kate one of first two graduates of Otterbein, other also a woman	Subject
Move, daughter Minnehaha is born in Lewisburg	Lineage/Genealogical
Video dedicated to Rev. and Emmeline Shaffer Miller both former curators	Object
Poster board lists Amanda as sister, but husband is mentioned first	Lineage/Genealogical

Parlor

Mention	Category
Ben and Kate are power couple, both educated	Object
Self-sketch of Minnehaha	MUB MC
Crystal fruit bowl wedding present	MUB MC

Bishop's Bedroom

Mention	Category
Daughters would change straw out of bed	Worker
Open air cradle	MUB MC
Parasol	MUB MC

Museum Room

Mention	Category
Hanby girls' bonnets	MUB MC
Quilt made by Kate for granddaughter	MUB MC

Pictures of Minnehaha and family	Dep. Mem. MC
Kate's book "The Widow"	Subject
Girls shoes, hair, pictures	MUB MC

Boy's Room

Mention	Category
Amanda and husband first white missionaries to Sierra Leone	Lineage/Genealogical
Mrs. King was a missionary friend of Amanda, have her wedding dress, almost got on the Titanic	Dep. Mem. MC
Children's accessories	MUB MC
Wedding gift of chairs made for Kate	MUB MC
8 kids, Ann's mother lived here too	Lineage/Genealogical
Girls did lots of lacework and buttons	MUB MC

Kitchen

Mention	Category
Mrs. Hanby's realm, originally 2 rooms with her mother living down here too	Worker
Mrs. Hanby and girls would make lots of bread, pies and cakes for UGRR	Worker, MUB MC
Pie safe, irons	Worker
Dacia Custer Shoemaker	Preservation
Weasel	Worker
Fashion magazine and how fashion worked	Broader Historical Context
Leather sewing machine	Worker

The most interesting stories that are not discussed in detail on the tour are those about Kate and Benjamin's daughter, Minnehaha, and Ann's mother Mary Miller. Minnehaha Hanby Jones, who went by Minnie, was an accomplished artist. While there are a few examples of her sketch work around the home, Minnie later paid for private art lessons from prominent artists in Chicago by selling her artwork. She later taught at the Pollock-Stephens Institute (a now defunct private day and boarding school for girls) in Birmingham, Alabama before marrying Frederick Dilwin Jones and moving to Los Angeles, California.¹³ In her brother's biography of their mother *The Widow*, Brainerd relates this anecdote from Minnie about her name

On account of her peculiar real name, the author's sister has not made public use of it, although she did when a little girl. Then she would say, "I am Minnehaha, when I am good and Minneboohoo, when I cry." Not knowing but that she might object to its being used in this little book, the author inquired of her as to her wish concerning it. She replied in a letter and made the following statement.

"My name Minnehaha throws light on father's character. It is my name. I love it although I never used it. When I was born, the Song of Hiawatha had been published and made a sensation. Our unpractical, beauty loving father, was charmed by the book and he gave me the name of the lovely Indian Heroine, Minnehaha. Who but Ben Hanby would choose such a name? I want my true name mentioned in the book."¹⁴

¹³ Fred. W. Green, *Birmingham Church Directory of Birmingham, Alabama* (Birmingham, AL: Dispatch Stationery Company, Printers and Binders, 1896), 6, Accessed January 8, 2020, <http://bplonline.cdmhost.com/digital/collection/p4017coll8/id/3285>; Hanby, 15.

¹⁴ Hanby, 14.

Mary Miller, Ann Miller Hanby's mother, is mentioned only in passing throughout the house. From further research, she died in 1856, well after all of her grandchildren were born.¹⁵ It is not known how long she lived with Ann, but Mary's husband and Ann's father, Samuel Miller, died in 1832 twenty-four years before Mary's death.¹⁶ Ann and William had married in 1830, leaving open the possibility that Mary lived with them for a considerable amount of time.¹⁷ This erasure of an older woman from the narrative of history is unfortunately a fairly common one. While she is mentioned in passing, the physical room she inhabited has been erased: the kitchen which was interpreted as Ann's domain was enlarged by absorbing her mother's room.

The Hanby House does an excellent job with interpreting women's work as difficult work that was equally important as men's work. There are also opportunities for improvement, by expanding stories of other women who lived there, giving a deeper portrait of their lives, especially in recognizing how their lives intersected with larger themes of history.

¹⁵ Justin Overby, "Mary Miller," *Find A Grave Database*, Created April 24, 2007, Accessed January 8, 2020 <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/19072396/mary-miller>.

¹⁶ Justin Overby, "Samuel Miller," *Find A Grave Database*, Created April 24, 2007, Accessed January 8, 2020 <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/19072372/samuel-miller>.

¹⁷ Westerville Historical Society, "The Hanbys – Ann Miller," *Hanby House: The House of Brotherhood*, Last updated: September 14, 2019, Accessed January 8, 2020, <http://hanbyhouse.org/The%20Hanbys.html#ann>.

Ohio Case Study Two: Harriet Beecher Stowe House

Mission Statement: “To sustain the legacy of Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Beecher family home in Cincinnati, Ohio.”¹⁸

The Harriet Beecher Stowe House (HBSH) in Cincinnati, Ohio is an excellent example of how historic house museums whose primary theme centers around a woman can still have room for improvement in interpreting women’s experiences. Admittedly, the HBSH has a narrow window in which to interpret the life of writer and abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe, but they limit themselves further by only discussing the events that led to her writing her flagship novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, rather than her entire life in Cincinnati. HBSH has this limited scope because most Stowe’s papers, ephemera, and material culture are housed at her Connecticut house, which she resided for far longer. HBSH attempts to widen their interpretation by examining the “life” of the house itself, as the home of the president of Lane Seminary, Stowe’s father Lyman Beecher, and later as the Edgemont Inn. Lane Seminary was a training institute for Presbyterian ministers – exclusively a male space. Stowe was a teenager and young adult when she lived here, staying intermittently and fulfilling the role of hostess at school functions held at the house. She also stayed at the house throughout her first pregnancy, which is only mentioned in passing.

¹⁸ “About the Friends of Harriet Beecher Stowe House,” *Harriet Beecher Stowe House*, <https://www.stowehousecincy.org/aboutus.html>

Primarily, HBSH could strengthen the connection between the Lane Seminary section of the tour and Stowe's life. Mentioned only briefly on text panels are the facts that she was a schoolteacher, courted and married Calvin Stowe and became a young mother to twins all while publishing her first thoughts on slavery and attending the Lane Seminary Debates. The Lane Debates are a crucial bridge in connecting these two interpretive themes. Lane Seminary's location, in Cincinnati – in the free state of Ohio but benefiting much from the pork products of slavery, is also important because it served as a place where slaveholders, abolitionists, and colonization advocates could all send their sons. These sons then debated their varied upbringings, and the Lane Debates, organized by Theodore Dwight Weld, served as a catalyst for Oberlin College to admit African American students.¹⁹

Stowe's father, as president of Lane Seminary, did not want the debates to continue, because the citizens of Cincinnati benefited financially from the institution of slavery. The support of the city was paramount to Lane's continued existence. The text panels state outright that Stowe, and her sister Catharine Beecher, attended the Lane Debates and Stowe's later writing on abolition and

¹⁹Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Cincinnati, Ohio, Field visit May 23, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University; Robert S. Fletcher, "The Guarantee of Academic Freedom," in *A History of Oberlin College From Its Foundation Through the Civil War* Vol. 1 (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company, 1943) Accessed January 9, 2020 <http://www2.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/LaneDebates/Fletcher/Chapter14.pdf>; John J. Miter, et.al., "Lane Seminary: Defence of the Students," *The Liberator*, vol.5, no. 2, January 10, 1835, Accessed January 9, 2020, <http://www2.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/LaneDebates/RebelsDefence.htm>.

Uncle Tom's Cabin show the great effect they had on her opinions. But nowhere is it stated how she felt about her father, a storied minister, choosing to end these debates over slavery.²⁰

Another way to strengthen their interpretation of women's experience is to examine Stowe's formative life itself, rather than just her writings. As mentioned previously, Stowe was married and has her first children during this period. She goes on to have seven more children, losing one to cholera. Her grief at the loss of her son Samuel Charles had a direct influence on the writing of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as she believed she could empathize with enslaved families separated at slave auctions.²¹ This point is made at HBSH, but again, on text panels in small print. There is far more information that HBSH could examine here, especially with motherhood in the nineteenth century.

HBSH could also improve their interpretation outside of the Beecher family. Lane Seminary ran into financial trouble after Lyman Beecher moved on from his post as president, and it was sold to the Montfort family in the 1870s. That family lived there until the 1930s, when affluent African Americans started to move into the Walnut Hill area of Cincinnati. Mrs. Montfort opted to sell the home to African American investors, and it became the Edgemont Inn, featured in

²⁰ Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Cincinnati, Ohio, Field visit May 23, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

²¹ "Family," *Harriet Beecher Stowe Center*, Accessed January 9, 2020, <https://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/harriet-beecher-stowe/family/>.

green books of the time. The Ohio Historical Society, later Ohio History Connection, purchased the home in the 1940s.²²

This is not to say that HBSH does not interpret women in a substantive way at all. The Harriet Beecher Stowe House is one of only three historic house museums in Ohio that present a gendered interpretation of an African American woman's life.²³ The story of freedom seeker Eliza Harris relayed on the tour (and on text panels), portrays a real woman escaping slavery with her baby on a cold, February night. Reverend John Rankin helped her cross, carrying her baby across the partially frozen Ohio River, and both had to be bathed in hot water until they were warm and well enough to carry on to the next station. The text panels quote Stowe writing about hearing this story, and her admiration for Eliza Harris.²⁴

HBSH does an excellent job of putting into context the writing and research of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* into the time in which it was written. Stowe lived in Cincinnati for twenty years, but only wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* after she moved back to Connecticut. It was her experiences in Cincinnati, and neighboring Kentucky, that ultimately led to the writing of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In addition to the story of Eliza Harris, Stowe witnessed a slave auction in Maysville, Kentucky

²² Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Cincinnati, Ohio, Field visit May 23, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

²³ The other historic house museums that present this are John Brown House and Reverend John Rankin House, the latter also owned by OHC.

²⁴ Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Cincinnati, Ohio, Field visit May 23, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

that greatly affected her. She'd also read *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly A Slave, Now An Inhabitant of Canada as Narrated by Himself*, which detailed the life of its Kentuckian author, first as a well-treated enslaved person, to an overseer, and eventually to freedom in Canada. He became the inspiration for the title character of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.²⁵

After *Uncle Tom's Cabin* publication, Southerners were outraged with the portrayal of slavery within its pages. They condemned the book as an utter fiction, that literally nothing in that book could have happened. Stowe then published a companion book, with all her citations and research notes, silencing critiques of that nature.

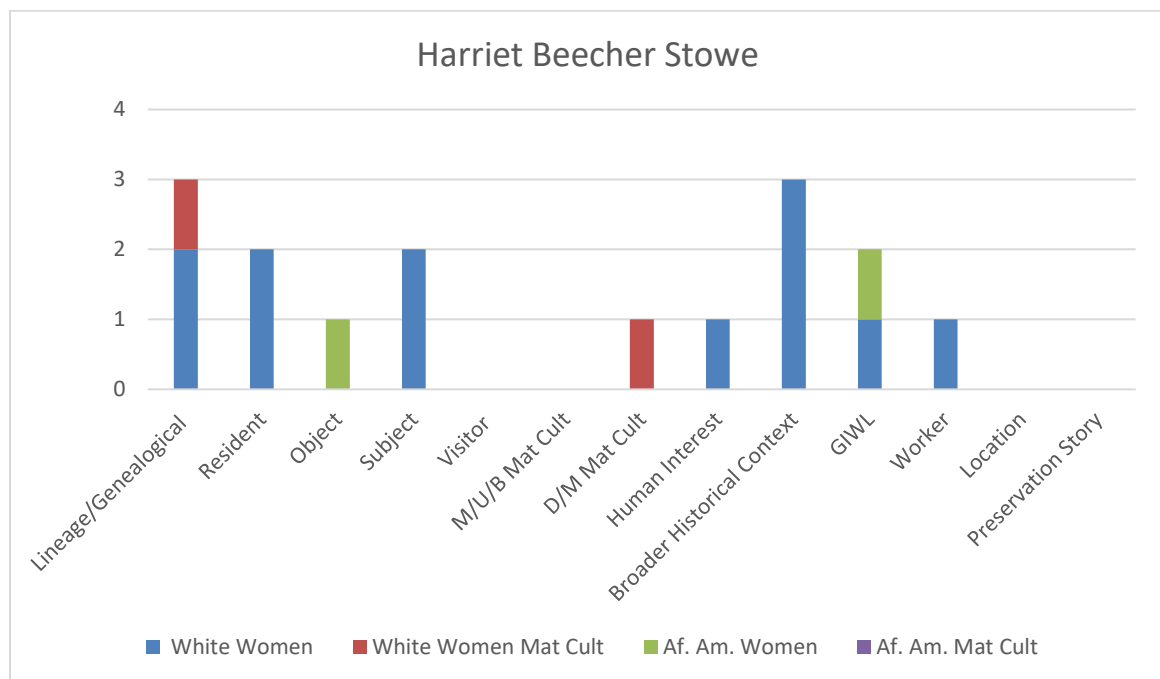


Figure 20: Shrum Gender Matrix graph of Harriet Beecher Stowe House

²⁵ Jared Brock, "The Story of Josiah Henson, the Real Inspiration for 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,'" *Smithsonian Magazine*, Published May 16, 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/story-josiah-henson-real-inspiration-uncle-toms-cabin-180969094/>.

Harriet Beecher Stowe House: Matrix Mentions Analysis

Entryway

Mention	Category
HBS is teenager when she lives here	Lineage/Genealogical
Lived here intermittently	Resident
Occasional teacher	Subject

Lyman Beecher's Study

Mention	Category
Harriet and Catherine attended Lane Debates – influence her thoughts on slavery	Subject

Parlor

Mention	Category
The Semicolon Club	Gender
Married Calvin Stowe in this room	Lineage/Genealogical
Replica portrait of HBS	Dep. Mem. MC
Family tree	Lineage/Genealogical
Interaction with African American servant/slave	Object Af Am

Dining Room

Mention	Category
HBS witness slave auction	Broader Historical Context
Eliza Harris story	Gender
Kept notes and citations, published later	Worker

Kitchen

Mention	Category
Timeline of her life and historical context	Broader Historical Context

1930s addition

Mention	Category
Mrs Montfort lived her by herself, then sold house to become Edgemont Inn	Human Interest

Part of HBSH’s mission is to interpret “the Beecher family home.” Their mission statement leaves open the possibility to interpret another notable Beecher woman: Catharine Beecher, female education advocate and teacher. While she did not live at the house with Harriet, Harriet did live with Catharine for a period of time, and also briefly taught at the school Catharine founded. Catharine continued to advocate for better educational opportunities for women and girls and founded societies and schools to further that goal both in Ohio and the rest of the United States. Catharine wrote extensively on women’s education, religion, health, and home economics, arguing that running a home was as complicated as running a business – necessitating the need for more robust female education.²⁶

There is one reason why Catharine may not be interpreted at the HBSH in Cincinnati. The Harriet Beecher Stowe Center in Connecticut holds all of

²⁶ “Family – Catharine Esther Beecher,” Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, <https://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/harriet-beecher-stowe/family/>.

Harriet's papers, and their digital presence tells a wider story about Harriet and her family's lives, including a detailed section about Catharine. There might be an agreement in place for the Cincinnati organization to only focus on Harriet's life in Cincinnati, which might be interpreted to exclude Catharine from the interpretation. If this is not the case, then Catharine's absence from HSBH's interpretation is an omission, one that fails to give larger context to women's education in the nineteenth century and to Harriet's life at large.

In their very narrow focus of the life Harriet Beecher Stowe, the HBSH does a fairly good job. There are real opportunities for widening the interpretation to include other aspects of her life in Cincinnati, as well as making more explicit connections between Lane Theological Seminary and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. HBSH is a case study showing that even historic house museums that focus on a woman, do not always give a complete picture of that woman.

Ohio Case Study Three: Adena Mansion and Gardens

Mission Statement: "The Adena Mansion & Gardens Society is dedicated to preserving the mansion, gardens and grounds of Thomas Worthington and family; to promoting his legacy of participation in Ohio's early history; and to enhancing present and future appreciation of Adena's contribution to our culture."²⁷

Adena Mansion and Gardens (AMG) was the home of one of the first senators from the newly minted state of Ohio, Thomas Worthington. He was also

²⁷ "About Us – Our Mission," *Adena Mansion and Gardens*, <https://www.adenamansion.com/about/>.

crucial in getting Ohio its statehood, personally traveling to Washington, D.C. and meeting with President Thomas Jefferson to urge him to pass the Enabling Act that would admit the Ohio territory into the union as one state. Worthington also served at various points in his political career as the governor and state representative of various counties and districts. This necessitated a huge amount of travel, both to the nation's capital, and around the new state.

His frequent travel meant that his wife, Eleanor Swearingen, oversaw the home and farm. Tasked with managing the grist, saw, and textile mills on the property as well as the pork packing, shipping, cattle farming, and land speculation business that the Worthingtons ran, Eleanor ably directed the sixty employees in addition to raising and teaching ten children, all of whom lived to adulthood.

Despite serving as what Ulrich called a "deputy husband" for the majority of her married life, the details of Eleanor's life seem to be wrapped into that of her husband's work.²⁸ Adena Mansion and Gardens attempts to correct this by showing, quite literally, that Eleanor was here more than Thomas was, by transcribing his diary onto a calendar next to a calendar that showed receipts for transactions that Eleanor wrote in Thomas' name.

In addition to interpreting Eleanor's life, AMG is unique in describing social connections between women. Nineteenth century women's diaries describe

²⁸ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1982), 35-50.

an intricate system of visitation, that gets more structured in the mid-to-late nineteenth century in the larger cities. Eleanor received frequent visits from her dear schoolfriend Lucretia, who would come to stay with her husband and children. Because Eleanor and Lucretia were such good friends, Thomas and Lucretia's husband, Henry Clay, the famous Kentucky politician, also became very well-acquainted, despite their disagreements on politics.²⁹ The social connections between women during this time very often led to more congenial political connections between their husbands.³⁰ Historic house museums, unfortunately, do not incorporate these social connections or their political ramifications into their tours, giving the impression that these large grand houses stood alone with the people inside them likewise.

Eleanor is the main woman interpreted at the home, although a significant portion of the tour is devoted to one of her five daughters, Sarah Worthington King Peter. Sarah's voice is present throughout the tour. She kept extensive diaries that the guides have used to create a more holistic version of life in the house when she was a child. The most striking example is what the guides call "The Crying Closet." Sarah snuck away from the house one day to visit her Aunt Sari, and when she returned home, her mother was furious. Eleanor locked her in that linen closet as punishment (the room is actually quite large) and Sarah wrote

²⁹ Alfred Byron Sears, *Thomas Worthington: Father of Ohio Statehood* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1998), 150. <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/31748>

³⁰ Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 1.

that she was angry and spat on all the linens and clothing stored in there as revenge.

Sarah herself is another interesting character. AMG widens their interpretive focus to examine her life as well, even though once she married the son of Rufus King (signer of the Constitution), she never lived there again. She escorted one of her younger brothers to Harvard and hired herself a professor from the university to tutor her, believing that a quality education should not be solely the realm of men. Later in life, she converted to Catholicism and went to the Vatican. She requested, and received, a papal audience, a rarity for a woman and an American, at that time. Back in Ohio, she moved to Cincinnati, starting a school of fine arts for women, and after the Civil War, she started another school – a trade school for indigent war widows and orphans.

Only three other daughters are mentioned, Eleanor (called Ellie), Elizabeth, and Mary. Ellie married a man with the last name of Watts and converted to Catholicism because of the influence of her sister Sarah. Elizabeth married and gave birth to eleven children, dying after the last one. She is quoted as stating “I had rather folks keep single.” Mary married late in life to Edward Mansfield and by all accounts, was very happy. The other daughter not mentioned was named Margaret.

In addition to the house tour, AMG also has an expansive museum that gives more detail to both the life of those who lived and worked at Adena and a broader historical context to what life was like in early Ohio. The museum does

most of the heavy lifting as far as the interpretation of women’s lives. The calendar comparison of Eleanor and Thomas’s schedules are in the museum, as well as primary sources from other men stating outright that Eleanor is making (and keeping) Thomas’s money while he was state crafting.

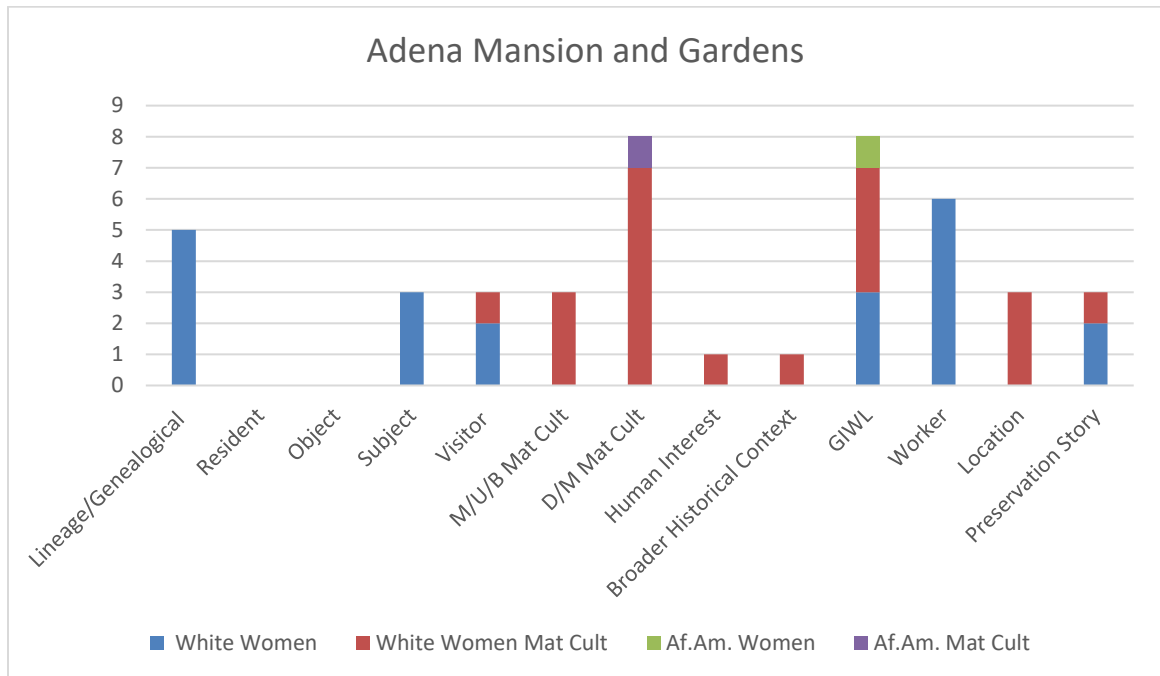


Figure 21: Shrum Gender Matrix graph of Adena Mansion and Gardens

Adena Mansion and Gardens: Matrix Mentions Analysis

Porch

Mention	Category
Thomas Worthington married Eleanor Swearingen	Lineage/Genealogical

Entryway

Mention	Category
---------	----------

Needlework of Thomas Jefferson done by a young girl (9-12) name not given	MUB MC
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Nursery

Mention	Category
10 kids, 5 boys, 5 girls	Lineage/Genealogical
Toddler bed and bed for servant girl	MUB MC

Master Bedroom

Mention	Category
Eleanor's favorite place was the garden	Subject

Eleanor's Parlor

Mention	Category
She used the parlor for: managing businesses, and household	Worker
Portrait at 50	Dep. Mem. MC
Watercolors of 2 girls	Dep. Mem. MC

Drawing Room

Mention	Category
Found description of original wallpaper from daughter's diary	Preservation Story
Adult only room, except for girls to entertain	

Dining Room

Mention	Category

Takes first son and Eleanor 12 years to pay off debts after Worthington dies	Subject
First wife Julia dies in childbirth	Dep. Mem. MC
Martha Piatt Reed Worthington is second wife, last Worthington to live here	Dep. Mem. MC
Mystery Mary portrait	Dep. Mem. MC
James and Julia's daughter sells house to Smith family, they deed it to state of OH	Preservation Story

Kitchen

Mention	Category
Spice chest belonged to Eleanor's grandmother, Phoebe Stroud. 9 generations used it. Mentions later that Eleanor is keeper of the keys, ties spice chest in	Gender

Sarah's Room

Mention	Category
Daughter, Sarah Worthington King Peters	Lineage/genealogical
Inherited furniture from King family	MUB MC
Hired herself and brother a tutor at Harvard	Gender
Converted to Catholicism	Subject
Sisters of St. Clair cared for her in old age	HI
Requested an audience with the Pope when she went to Italy and got it	Gender

Started a school of fine arts and a trade school for women	Worker
--	--------

Largest Bedroom

Mention	Category
Henry and Lucretia Clay stayed here, Lucretia and Eleanor childhood friends	Visitor

Trunk Room

Mention	Category
Where guests would store their trunks (and servants)	Visitor

Girls' Room

Mention	Category
Eleanor – called Ellie, married a Watts, converted to Catholicism cos of Sarah	Gender
Elizabeth – had 11 kids, died after last one, didn't seem too happy with married life	Lineage/genealogical
Mary – married "late" (29) to Mansfield and was very happy	Gender

Crying Closet

Mention	Category
Eleanor locked Sarah in here for sneaking over to Aunt Sari's. Sarah got revenge by spiting on all the clothes and linens in there	Gender

Office

Mention	Category
Eleanor cute a doorway out to get to clerk's office, found a scrap of wallpaper and were able to recreate original	Preservation
Family bibles of both sides	Lineage/genealogical

The large museum in addition to the house tour gives Adena Mansion and Gardens the advantage in women's representation. This is only possible because they are in the higher institutional budget category (\$250-500,000) set by AASLH. The increased amount of revenue does not mean that this type of representation is out of means for historic house museums in lower budget categories, as the Tennessee case studies, and conclusion will show.

Tennessee Case Study One: Dickson-Williams Mansion

Mission Statement: "The Mission of the Dickson-Williams Historical Association, Inc. is to preserve and protect the architecture of the Dickson-Williams Mansion for a historic home museum and provide educational programming that will promote the history and culture of Greeneville, Greene County, Tennessee and the United States and enhance heritage tourism."³¹

The Dickson-Williams Mansion offers a unique case study opportunity. In January 2019, Chick History, Inc. worked with the Dickson-Williams Mansion

³¹ Correspondence with Wilhelmina Williams, Director of Dickson-Williams Historical Association, March 10, 2020.

board and staff to re-tool their existing tour to one that captures the unique contributions of the women who lived and worked there as well as the broader historical context in which they lived. This section will therefore analyze both versions of the tour, the original and the updated, to reflect how Shrum's Gender Matrix can be used as a tool in the strategic planning process. The first section will reflect the information provided on the first tour, before prior research.

William Dickson funded the construction of the mansion in 1816, completing it in 1821. The mansion was to be a gift for his only child's wedding, Catharine Dickson. She was fifteen when he began building this home for her, and she moved in when she married Alexander Williams in 1823. She attended a finishing school in Philadelphia, as well as Salem Female Academy in North Carolina. The house had a freshwater spring on the property and a few slave cabins to the right of the property. Catharine was named after her mother's sister, Catharine Hale, who moved to Greeneville, Tennessee from Virginia.³²

Greeneville was a hotspot during the Civil War as a Unionist town that was home to Andrew Johnson and changed hands between the Union and Confederate forces during the four-year period. The house has the dubious honor of being the place where Confederate General John Hunt Morgan died. He stayed in in the mansion with the family and tried to escape during a Federal ambush of the house but was shot during his escape. Contemporary newspapers at the time

³² Dickson-Williams Mansion, Greeneville, Tennessee, Field visit November 15, 2018, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

stated that Catharine Williams and her enslaved maidservant, Minerva Clem, dressed the body for burial. In addition to the story of General John Hunt Morgan, the mansion also discussed the story of novelist Frances Hodgson Burnett. A desk that is rumored to be hers was donated by a woman named Betsy Bowman, and the desk is like one they know she owned. Catharine is also credited with saving the house during a Federal attack. The Union forces attempted to burn the house, but when she came outside, she yelled at them that she had sons fighting on both sides and to not burn her down her home. The general called off the attack, and the basement rafters still bear the scorch marks of their attempted burning. Another interesting section of the house is the area above the kitchen, which is interpreted as enslaved quarters.³³

The house leaves the family in 1870, Catharine dies in 1874 but lived with her daughter Eliza Williams Sneed in Knoxville. The house later becomes both a hotel and hospital until it is restored as a historical site in the 1970s. Throughout the tour, the guide points out various portraits of descendants, describing genealogical relations, but not much else. Other references to women related to material culture as well.³⁴

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid

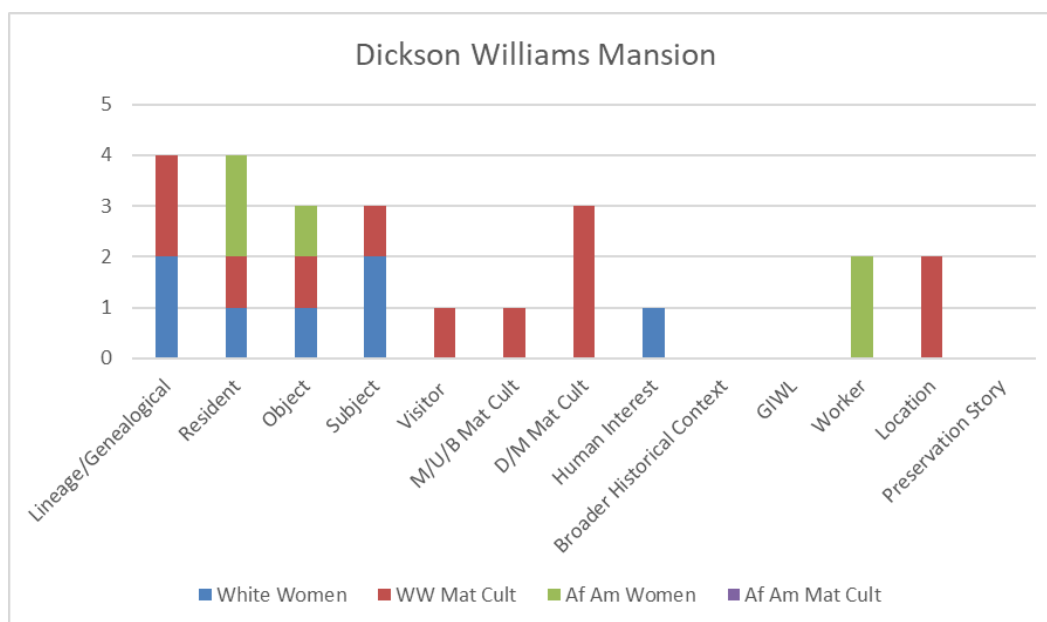


Figure 22: Shrum Gender Matrix graph of Dickson-Williams Mansion

Dickson-Williams Mansion: Matrix Mentions Analysis

Ladies Parlor

Mention	Category
House built for wife as dowry	Object
Eliza Williams lived here from 1823-1868	Resident
Settees are short for women to catch light to work on sewing	User of Material Culture
Catherine (daughter) went to Salem Academy	Subject
Eliza Sneed (granddaughter) MC – portrait	Depicted in Material Culture

Library

Mention	Category
Rosenblatts – portrait, depicted in material cultures	Depicted in Material Culture

Dining Room

Mention	Category
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Coffee and Tea set gift for Eliza Sneed	Object
Dandridge Roombach (portrait)	Visitor
Grandchildren painting	Depicted in Material Culture

Kitchen/Stairwell

Mention	Category
Where slaves/servants took their meals and mostly worked	Resident/Worker *Mention of enslaved is unisex
Catherine Williams saved house from Union burning	Subject

Slaves Quarters

Mention	Category
Area for house slaves, lady's maid, men's valet, kitchen staff.	Resident/Worker *Mention of enslaved is unisex

Frances Hodgson Burnett Room

Mention	Category
Desk were Frances Hodgson Burnett worked	Subject
Last two Williams children born here (1 girl)	Depicted in Material Culture
Mention of 30 slaves	Object *Mention of enslaved is unisex

John Hunt Morgan Room

Mention	Category
First wife dies in childbirth	Lineage/Genealogical

Richmond hoopskirt story – He had raise face down a Federal force than fight his way through a contingent of Richmond hoopskirts	Human Interest
Second wife was Sneed’s Nashville partner’s daughter	Lineage/Genealogical

Master Bedroom

Mention	Category
Wedding gown and parasol of Catharine Dickson	Resident
Cradle	Lineage/Genealogical

This review of the tour script gives some tantalizing clues to a larger and more inclusive story. The first and most obvious is to round out the depiction of Catharine Dickson Williams. Through further research, Chick History, Inc. found letters from her father to the sisters at Salem Female Academy, giving instruction on how to deal with his daughter, as well as tuition receipts and report cards. Further research revealed a wide network of girls from prominent families attending Salem Female Academy at the same time, and their connections to each other were fascinating. From this, the board decided to focus Catharine’s story on one of privilege and education. As the only daughter of a wealthy merchant, she was well-taken care of, even spoiled, and received the best that William Dickson could provide.³⁵

³⁵ Research into Catharine Dickson Williams and Minerva Clem took place January 15 – 18, 2019 at the Dickson-Williams Mansion in Greeneville, Tennessee. We relied on digitized records, as well as archival sources the museum had on hand, and those on display at the Greene County Historical Society.

To contrast that image, Chick History, Inc. then looked at the story of Minerva Clem, the lady's maid that also helped to prepare General John Hunt Morgan's body for burial. Records of enslaved people are spotty at best before the Civil War, but at the time of Morgan's death in 1864 Minerva was a young woman, about twenty years old. The team at Chick History, Inc. traced her life to 1919 where she disappears from the record and presumably died. From census records, Chick History, Inc. found that she was able to read, but not write. She was primarily a housekeeper, both of her own home and others. She most likely had two children, although it is possible that they were other relations. Her husband, Thomas Clem, was a well-known bricklayer in the area, responsible for churches, grand houses, and public buildings alike, some that still stand today.

The interpretative plan then began to take shape. Dickson-Williams Mansion would start with the story of Catharine Dickson Williams, describing her education and opportunities, then the story would converge at the nexus of Morgan's death, and Minerva Clem would then be the primary female interpretation. What would life be like for a newly freed woman in Greeneville, Tennessee? What innovations did she see in her lifetime? What promises of Reconstruction went unkept? These questions would challenge visitors and interpreters alike in their assumptions of the South, and in their assumptions of what women, black and white, free and enslaved, could and did do in the late nineteenth century. The interpretation could then include both the incredibly important Civil War history, while also acknowledging the lives of the women who lived and worked in the home.

Tennessee Case Study Two: Mabry Hazen House

Mission Statement: “The mission of the Hazen Historical Museum Foundation is to preserve the historic fabric of Mabry’s Hill and Bethel Cemetery, and to educate the public about the rich history of the Mabry, Hazen, and Winstead families whose lives left lasting impressions on Knoxville, Tennessee.”³⁶

Mabry Hazen House is another historic home that, like the Harriet Beecher Stowe House in Cincinnati, Ohio, focuses their interpretation on a woman. Evelyn Hazen becomes the primary focus in the home, after a brief primer on her family history. Mabry Hazen House concentrates their tour on the scandals in the family, first in the duels of Evelyn’s grandfather, and then Evelyn’s unfortunate engagement.³⁷ Evelyn’s story takes place in the twentieth century, out of the intended period for this study, however the interpreters at Mabry Hazen House produced such a compelling narrative, that it merited inclusion as a case study. Furthermore, this case study also gives the opportunity to show a possibility to connect disparate eras together, not through a familial line, but through a theme: loss.

Evelyn was romantically involved with a man named Ralph Sharinghouse. He proposed to her before he left to fight in the Great War (World War I), and they consummated their relationship. She pressured him to finalize their agreement to get married, but he consistently put her off, first so they could be

³⁶ “About Us,” *Mabry Hazen House*, <http://www.mabryhazen.com/about-us>.

³⁷ Mabry Hazen House, Knoxville, Tennessee, Field visit September 15, 2018, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

better off financially, then so he could have a better relationship with her parents. In 1930, he told her to see other men socially, so he could focus on his business, which in this case meant have an affair. Evelyn was fired from her teaching job in April 1932 for impropriety in her relationship in Ralph, and on June 1, 1932 he formally ended the relationship. She then hatched a plot to murder him, but her mother found out about the plan and committed her to a hospital. Evelyn filed charges against Ralph for breach of promise and seduction in December 1937, creating a sensational national news story. Women across the United States supported her, and a group from Covington, Kentucky came to the trial every day, where they called for the judge to appoint only women to the jury.³⁸

Evelyn won the trial, and was awarded eighty-thousand dollars in damages, but never collected a dime because Ralph was destitute. After the trial, she was blacklisted from Knoxville society, and became a recluse. She inherited the property in 1953 and lived there until her death in 1987. She eventually became the secretary for the University of Tennessee English department. She never married, and while she had two sisters who married, they never had children. After her death, she laid out two options in her will: sell everything and give the proceeds to the local humane society or to make the home a museum. The Hazen Historical Association chose the latter and opened the home to the public in 1992.³⁹

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

Because of this scandal, the fact she never married, or had children, the interpretation of the house can, on occasion, fall prey to ‘Miss Havisham’ disorder. In two visits to Mabry-Hazen House, separated by a year, two different interpreters specifically mention that she had cats. The entire collection of the house is original, and interpreters occasionally pointed out that the objects were left in the place that Evelyn had them when she died. Despite this, the interpreters have made some innovations in the house. The Hazen family had a huge collection of glassware, silver, and porcelain items, and the historical association has converted closets into open, lighted storage to display it. The majority of mentions of women are related to material culture.⁴⁰

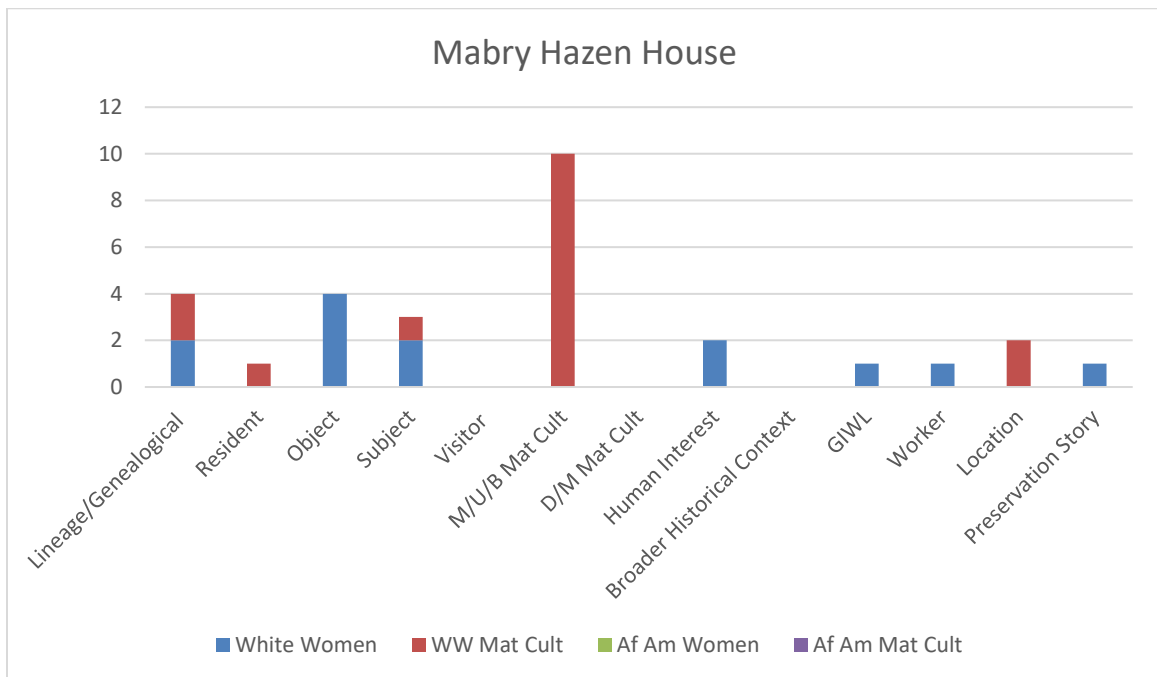


Figure 23: Shrum Gender Matrix graph of Mabry Hazen House

⁴⁰ Ibid. The earlier tour mentioned took place in March 2017.

Mabry Hazen House: Matrix Mentions Analysis

Entryway

Mention	Category
Laura Churchwell Mabry	Lineage/Genealogical MC
House is constructed as compromise between J.A. Mabry and Laura, first one was cold and drafty	Object
Alice Mabry is daughter of J.A. Mabry Jr, marries a Hazen to increase their fortune	Lineage/Genealogical
J.A. Jr. has three daughters: Lillian, Evelyn, Marie	Lineage/Genealogical MC
Alice raised Evelyn as staunch Victorian, but becomes more liberal as she gets older	Object
Sharinghouse scandal	Gendered Interpretation, Object
Evelyn owns house after 1953	Resident
Evelyn is secretary of UT English department	Subject
Evelyn never married, sisters had no children	Object
Evelyn dies in 1987, leaves house's future option – Opens in 1992 as museum	Preservation Story

Drawing Room

Mention	Category
Settee where Sharinghouse affair is consummated	Human Interest
Pie crust table owned by Laura Churchwell	MUB MC

Music Room

Mention	Category
Alice Hazen was skilled pianist	Subject
Toy piano for girls to learn	Subject MC

Butler's Pantry

Mention	Category
Biscuit board	Worker – non specified race
Painting of house by Anna Sandhu Ray, wife of James Earl Ray, killer of MLK, Jr. The two met when she was the courtroom sketch artist at his trial	Human Interest

Nursery

Mention	Category
Laura and Joseph had 14 children, one lived to adulthood but was killed in duel	Lineage/Genealogical
Interpreted to Evelyn's childhood, with dollhouses	MUB MC

Writing Room

Mention	Category
Marie's political history notebook	MUB MC
Chaise lounge where Marie died	MUB MC

Evelyn's Room

Mention	Category
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Evelyn thought her room was haunted, so she moved her bed first to the lounge, then to the landing	Subject
Social Register of 1934 – where she is excluded	MUB MC
Make up case discussing daily routine	MUB MC
Books about Spiritualism – Nostradamus	Subject

Alice and Rush's Room

Mention	Category
Alice's dress	MUB MC
Marie's dress	MUB MC

Pink Room

Mention	Category
Lillian separated and divorced her husband in 1927, later died of smallpox	Lineage/Genealogical
Marie's husband died of alcoholism, she died of malnutrition	Lineage/Genealogical

The interpreters at Mabry Hazen House have an opportunity to explore other aspects of Evelyn's life should they so choose. Hardly any space is given to how she felt about being excluded, or indeed, how her mother felt about losing her husband in a duel, or her grandmother about losing all her children. A primary theme that the Hazen Historical Association could use is loss: how it unites across generations and is a universal human experience. They also have a unique opportunity with a completely original collection, the historical facts of the tour

are given in the entryway and the rest of the tour is pointing out interesting objects. The interpreters can use these objects as more than just sensational or tragic objects, but as an examination of the female experience.

Tennessee Case Study Three: Oaklands Mansion

Mission Statement: “Oaklands Association, Inc. is a non-profit educational organization whose mission is to preserve its local history and inspire an appreciation of Oaklands’ unique past, and to enhance our community’s quality of life.”⁴¹

Oaklands Mansion in Murfreesboro, Tennessee offered a self-guided tour on panels throughout their historic home. There are pros and cons to having a self-guided panel tour: the obvious pros are that the panels save on labor cost, as the historic house does not need multiple interpreters to run multiple tours, guests can go through at their own pace, the text occasionally allows for more in-depth analysis of some topics, and more control over the content of the tours. There are drawbacks as well: if there is no interpreter there, any question the guest has goes unanswered until the end of the tour, when they might have forgotten what query they had, and the personal connection is lost. House museums are intimate spaces and having an interpreter there can create a more personalized experience for the guests.

Oaklands Mansion was home to the Maney family. Sally Hardy Murfree Maney originally inherited from her father, Col. Hardy Murfree, the tract of land upon which the mansion was built. She and her husband, Dr. James Maney, first

⁴¹ “Mission Statement,” *Oaklands Mansion*, <http://www.oaklandsmansion.org/mission/>.

built a two-room brick house and later expanded it into the two-story ell shape it is in today. The house is primarily interpreted to the second period of occupation, that of their son Lewis Maney and his wife Rachel Adeline Cannon Maney. Called Adeline throughout the text panels, she is the main woman examined within the house.⁴²

Adeline and Lewis added on to house a two-story Italianate addition, creating the façade and front rooms there today. Adeline is described in the dining room as the supervisor of the house: she managed enslaved workers, “prepared orders for supplies, planned menus for daily meals, and supervised their preparation,” in addition to being the keeper of keys for all the valuables, like sugar, spices, glassware, china, and silverware, within the home.⁴³ The panels further drive home this message of plantation management in Adeline and Lewis’ bedroom, where they draw attention to her writing desk and state: “The plantation mistress was actually the manager of her large household. This role required much bookkeeping, supervision, management skills, and demanding physical labor.”⁴⁴

⁴² Oaklands Mansion, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Field visit February 1, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

⁴³ Family Dining Room Text Panel, Oaklands Mansion, February 1, 2019

⁴⁴ Lewis and Adeline’s Bedroom Text Panel, Oaklands Mansion, February 1, 2019.

Despite the well-done focus on Adeline’s role as household manager, little attention is paid to those she managed: the enslaved staff.⁴⁵ They are only mentioned as individuals once: in a section where some are named with their price when sold. Further research finds that most of the enslaved population was moved to another plantation, Trio, that the Maneys owned in Mississippi.⁴⁶ Other mentions of enslaved people are ungendered, referring to all enslaved people rather than enslaved women. An example of this is in the text panel of the biscuit table.

What kind of table is this? The biscuit table is a very specific form found primarily in the upper south and is a piece of furniture with a distinct tie to antebellum domestic slavery. The table was used to create a type of biscuit called a ‘beaten biscuit.’ The beaten biscuit recipe is very simple requiring only three ingredients, flour, lard, and milk. Before the advent of commercial leavening agents like baking soda and baking powder, the simple beaten biscuit dough could be folded and beaten with a wooden mallet numerous times, even as many as a hundred times, a light and flaky dough was the final result. When pricked with a fork and baked in a hot oven, the tiny biscuits baked up light and airy. The labor required to create such a bread was time consuming and arduous and the white flour required for the dough was an expensive commodity before the 1850s. Therefore, the beaten biscuit was almost exclusively found on the tables of elite slave owning southerners prior to the civil war. Following the Civil war, with a ‘Domestic labor problem’ in the South, a new mechanical device was created to save time. Called a ‘biscuit brake’ or ‘biscuit machine,’ the device featured a pair of parallel rollers and hand crank resembling the rollers on a washing machine or pasta maker. Folding and running the dough through the rollers saved time and still produced a light flaky biscuit so housewives could make biscuits on their own without domestic help. However, the baking powder biscuit we know today became increasingly popular as the 20th century progressed and today the old beaten biscuit has nearly faded into the annals of southern culinary history.

⁴⁵ “Slavery and Freedom at Oaklands,” *Oaklands: An Interactive Timeline*, Oaklands Mansion, <http://www.oaklandsmansion.org/history-of-oaklands-2/>; Enslaved at Oaklands Text Panel, Oaklands Mansion, February 1, 2019

⁴⁶ “Slavery and Freedom at Oaklands,” *Oaklands: An Interactive Timeline*, Oaklands Mansion, <http://www.oaklandsmansion.org/history-of-oaklands-2/>.

The text here very clearly identifies that beaten biscuits are tied to domestic slavery, and that the work was arduous. Despite these laudable inclusions, *nothing is said about the individual*. The text relies on the guests to use their preconceived notions to conjure up who might be making this beaten biscuit in the antebellum south. While an effective device, when it comes to the interpretation of slavery, and the work that enslaved women did in particular, recognizing that most of the cooks for white wealthy families such as the Maneys would be enslaved women is an important step in identifying African American women's labor.

Vagnone and Ryan recognized that most people do not have a deep knowledge of the historic context of this time period and are looking to see themselves reflected in the interpretation.⁴⁷ The biscuit board text does not reflect a lived experience that most people would remember. A better tie-in to today might be how a biscuit board had a specific purpose unlike our multipurpose counters in today's kitchens.

Another point about this text panel is the notion of a "domestic labor problem" in the South after the Civil War. What this phrase hints to is a lack of enslaved women doing domestic labor – for free. A biscuit board is a time saving device to a white woman, because her time is valuable, unlike the enslaved

⁴⁷ Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast, Inc., 2016), 101-104.

woman who did this labor previously. Domestic labor only becomes a “problem” when one has to pay for it.

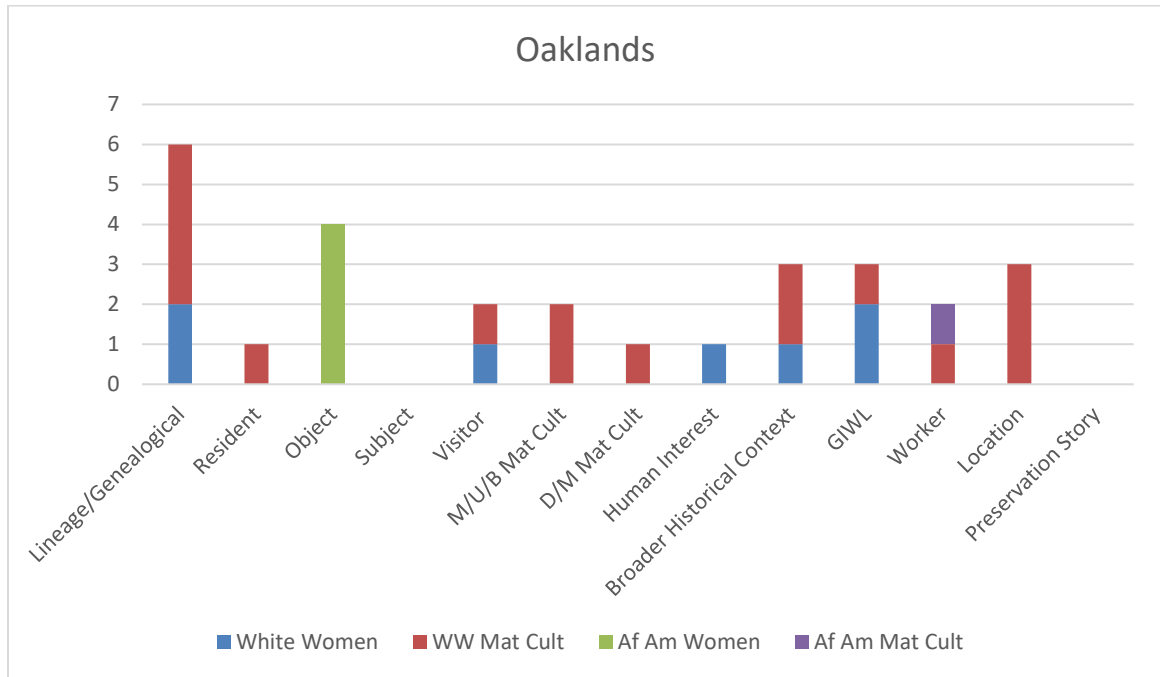


Figure 24: Shrum Gender Matrix graph of Oaklands Mansion

Oaklands Mansion: Matrix Mentions Analysis

Front Hall

Mention	Category
The paintings on the walls in this room are of Lewis Meredith Maney and his wife, Rachel Adeline Cannon Maney, master and mistress of Oaklands in the 1860s.	Lineage/Genealogical Mat Cult
A formal parlor was created for Adeline to receive daytime callers and a library was created for Lewis across the hall to entertain visiting gentleman.”	Location

The Parlors

Mention	Category
Adeline Maney, the lady of the house, would have supervised her domestic slaves in serving refreshments to her guests.	Worker
In 1877, Lewis and Adeline's daughter, Shelly Maney, was married in the parlor. Her groom, Horace Childress, was the nephew of Sarah Childress Polk. The widow of President Polk was a guest at this event.	Human Interest, Lineage/Genealogical, Visitor
. Portraits of Dr. James Maney and Mrs. Maney hang in this room by a prominent Middle Tennessee portrait painter, William Browning Cooper. Mrs. Maney was painted in mourning wearing a black dress with a large black brooch. She lived to see five of her eight children die, and four of those children died in one four-month period.	Dep./Mem. Mat Cult
Mourning Hair Art: During the Civil War, it was common for wives, mothers, sisters and sweethearts would take a lock of their soldier's hair for safe keeping. If their loved one was killed during the war they would have a lasting remembrance. The hair would then be made into memorial jewelry or placed inside a locket. It was believed that wearing hair jewelry made them closer to the departed loved one. Hair of a departed loved one would also be used in a 'mourning wreath' in which a flower made of hair and wire would be made and placed on the wreath. The center flower of the wreath	Dep./Mem. Mat Cult

would be the hair of the most recent death. Flowers would be moved up along the wreath as others passed. The opening at the top of the wreath would represent ascension into Heaven.	
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Back Room

Mention	Category
Unnamed photograph of female visitor	Visitor Mat. Cult.
Darrows and friends photograph	
Annie Byrn Roberts wedding photograph: "Annie Byrn Roberts. November 20, 1923. Annie's husband, Bradford Earl Roberts, spent his childhood at Oaklands. He was the son of R.B. and Jennie Roberts, owners of Oaklands from 1912-1938."	Lineage/Genealogical Mat. Cult.
Anne Byrn Roberts wedding photograph (different) "Anne Byrn Roberts. September 10, 1949. Anne was the daughter of Annie and Bradford Earl Roberts."	Lineage/Genealogical Mat. Cult.

Back Room II

Mention	Category
Biscuit table (caption mentioned above)	Worker – African American (implied)

Family Dining Room

Mention	Category
<p>Between meals, however, the room became a work space for Adeline. Adeline spent much of her day in this part of the house. The running of the large household was her primary responsibility. She prepared orders for supplies, planned menus for daily meals, and supervised their preparation. Enslaved individuals who worked in the house were under Adeline's direction.</p>	Worker
<p>Luxury items and foodstuffs were kept locked away in various cabinets and closets throughout the house and storerooms. These items were checked and inventoried on a regular basis. Glassware, china, silver, and linens were constantly counted and recounted. Linens were often given inventory numbers with ink. Housewives had a fear that their slaves, if given the opportunity, would steal from them. Adeline kept keys on a chain in her pocket to distribute foodstuffs and supplies to the enslaved as they were needed. Notice the locks and keyholes on the pie safe, corner cupboard, and the sugar chest in this room.</p>	Gendered Interpretation

Dr. Maney's Bedroom and Office

Mention	Category
<p>Following the death of Mrs. Sallie Maney in 1857, Dr. James Maney slowly went into a period of retirement.</p>	Lineage/Genealogical

Connecting Section on Slavery

Mention	Category
The identities of many of the enslaved people at Oaklands are unknown, but the names of some can be found on bills of sale in deed records	Object
Martha, 30, bought for \$700 in 1850	Object
Matilda and her child Sally, ages not given, bought for \$1250 in 1858	Object
Sylvia and child Ben, and boy Peter, ages not given, bought for \$1500 in 1859; sold the following week for \$1600.	Object

Lewis and Adeline's Bedroom

Mention	Category
The master bedroom was often the domain of the lady of the house. It served as her private sitting room.	Gendered Interpretation (applied to entire panel)
She planned menus for upcoming events, saw to her personal correspondence, and tended to her infant children. The small writing desk belonged to Adeline and the family tells us that it was used in her bedroom. The plantation mistress was actually the manager of her large household. This role required much bookkeeping, supervision, management skills, and demanding physical labor	Worker, MUB Mat. Cult.
The baby bed was once used as a cradle. It is original to the Maney family and belonged to Adeline Maney. Adeline had eight children at Oaklands and three died at a young	MUB Mat. Cult

age. The family used this piece until the 1960s when it was donated to the museum's permanent collection	
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The Girls' Bedroom

Mention	Category
We are now in the bedroom used by the Maney girls.	Location
In a family of eight, you can understand that each child could not have their own private bedroom. Children of the nineteenth century were accustomed to sharing rooms and sharing beds.	Broader Historical Context
Lewis and Adeline had four daughters – Fannie, Shelley, Mary, and Lavenia. Two Maney girls died very young. Lavenia died in 1837 when she was just a few months old. Mary died in 1863 at age 10.	Lineage/Genealogical
Oaklands is fortunate to have several fine examples of stitched samplers made by young ladies in Middle Tennessee. Girls learned to sew when they were very young. A sampler is a piece of embroidery or cross-stitching produced as a demonstration or a test of skill in needlework. It often includes the alphabet, figures, motifs, decorative borders and sometimes the name of the person who created it. Samplers were often exhibited for Trustees and Board members when the school term ended at young lady's academies. Dr. Maney served as a Trustee for the	MUB Mat. Cult.

Murfreesboro Female Academy in the 1830s.	
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Boys' Bedroom

Mention	Category
Four boys used this room in the 1860s. In the 19th century, young boys and girls in elite families were reared differently. Young girls were raised to become refined young ladies and were often under the direct supervision of their mother or another female relative. Boys were allowed much more liberty and freedom. The Maney boys had their own ponies and rode into town to visit friends, and they learned to hunt and fish at a young age.	Broader Historical Context

Front Hall and Bedrooms

Mention	Category
If it were a busy season at Oaklands, a group of ladies would share this room or an entire family might use these spaces.	Broader Historical Context

Oaklands Mansion represents the life of Adeline Maney in an accurate way. They are quick to point out the incredible labor that comes along with managing a plantation, as well as the responsibilities she had as a hostess and mother. Their interpretation of Sallie H. Maney, the woman who originally inherited the land and built the house, however, is lacking, as well as their

interpretation of slavery. There is potential in Oaklands' narrative to create an excellent interpretation of slavery and the enslaved experience.

Oaklands Mansion faces a problem that many other historic house museums face when attempting to more substantially interpret women: they have no documentation. In this case, family lore states that the Maneys purposefully destroyed their own records, another fact that audiences might like to know. While many sites would see this as a negative, this may make it easier to interpret women. Some historic house museums are uncomfortable straying too far from what they explicitly know about the family, when in some cases giving the broader historical context will do. For a family like the Maneys, it is perfectly fine to make assumptions based on what we already know about other white, wealthy families in the Middle Tennessee region. It is important to include a caveat but using phrases like "families like the Maneys" or "women like Adeline" will work perfectly well in maintaining historical accuracy even if the specifics of her life cannot be known.

This strategy can also be employed in interpreting enslaved women and free domestic servants of any race. Many sites do not have documentation on the enslaved or free domestic servants that worked at their house. Research done by historians like Pustz and Fox-Genovese can offer an example of how to interpret, in general terms, the lives of enslaved and free domestic servants. The conclusion will offer more substantive advice for historic house museums looking to incorporate women into their interpretation.

CHAPTER V: INTERPRETING WOMEN'S PRESERVATION SOCIETIES

In this chapter I will examine the connections between the representation of women and historic preservation. While historic preservation is an expansive field, for the purposes of this study, I have narrowed it to refer to the initial efforts to save a historic home and turn it into a historic house museum. This chapter will compare how Tennessee and Ohio historic house museums interpret their individual preservation stories and discuss the importance of statewide preservation networks.

Women's history and historic house museums are inextricably linked through historic preservation in the United States. The first homes saved were those of 'Great Men,' and the women who fought to preserve these homes were the 'Great Women' of the historic preservation field. While preservationists and historians know well the stories of Ann Pamela Cunningham and the Mount Vernon Ladies Association (MVLA), their story is not often disseminated to the public. This becomes even more true when analyzing smaller, more localized societies that saved homes that belonged to those did not have the influence as that of our state and national leaders

The case studies within this chapter examine two such societies: the Ladies' Hermitage Association, renamed the Andrew Jackson Foundation in 2014, and the Fairfield Heritage Association, in Tennessee and Ohio,

respectively.¹ While the Ladies Hermitage Association was created using the same model as the MVLA, the Fairfield Heritage Association was established significantly later in 1962, showing women's continued involvement in historic preservation even after the professionalization of the field.² Each of these historic preservation societies were comprised predominantly of women who worked together to save prominent homes of in their communities.

Within this chapter is an exploration of how the sites in Tennessee and Ohio interpret their individual preservation stories. The phrase 'preservation stories' throughout this chapter refers what can be called the origin story of the historic house museum, and not on-going preservation concerns, or current site management. My supposition in this chapter is sites that interpret their preservation story will likely have more substantive mentions of women, leading to the conclusion that one strategy for increasing the number complex stories about women at historic sites is to talk about the stories of the people who initially organized to preserve notable historic houses and places. This strategy is supported by data collected in both Ohio and Tennessee and is fully laid out below.

It is the prerogative of each site to decide what and how they will interpret their individual story, preservation story included or not. Some sites may feel that

¹ "The Hermitage/Andrew Jackson Foundation – Statements," *Givingmatters.com*, <https://givingmatters.civicore.com/index.php?section=organizations.mission&action=main&fwID=497>.

² "History of Fairfield County Heritage Association," Fairfield County Heritage Association, Lancaster, Ohio 43130, Fairfield County, <https://www.fairfieldheritage.com/History-of-Fairfield-Heritage-Association.html>.

they best serve their stakeholders and community by maintaining a decorative arts focus, and those sites are needed to show an evolution of material culture throughout time, or to tell important and seldom-told stories about the past. Other sites may want to widen their interpretation to include other stories, about the more recent past or present. This study is for the latter.

It is important that the people who interpret historic house museums and sites tell the story of how community members initially saved and preserved these historic houses to remind visitors where we come from, but also to inform the community that these houses belong to them and their communities. People saved, restored, refurnished, fought for, and fundraised for the houses, former neighbors of those who live in those communities now. Telling the preservation story can give a sense of ownership and pride in that old house; if the guests know why it's there, and who saved it, they might be more likely to want to keep it around. While interpreting the preservation story is not a panacea for all that ails historic house museums, it is at least a tonic that can give some much need balance to the homes of the Great Men and tell the stories of Great Women too.

Tennessee Preservation Data

All of the twenty-seven homes surveyed in Tennessee interpret their preservation origin story in some way. The majority (sixteen) have a historic marker either affixed to the home itself or freestanding on the grounds. Eleven historic homes are further differentiated into categories that represent how interpreters discussed the preservation of the home: a plaque with some

interpretation or discussion of preservation, a plaque and a mention of who donated the house, a plaque with integration of the preservation story into the tour, and those three categories again (interpretation, donation, integration) without plaques. The data is represented in Figure 1.

The term ‘plaque’ here refers to any marker denoting historical significance. At some houses, this may be a state historical marker with historical information, at others a National Register marker, and still others a marker of the local historical society, with or without names of individuals. The generic ‘plaque’ category is meant to capture all of these variations, as a recognition that some organization saw fit to preserve the home, even if the preservation origin story is not integrated or interpreted in the tour.

In the ‘plaque/interpretation’ category, the interpreters generally stopped by the plaque that acknowledged their preservation and discussed their preservation story. Sometimes this was as simple as stating the year the house came into their possession, the people who led the effort to save the home, if there were any changes in ownership, or how much it cost to renovate. Adding some information to the plaque acknowledges the work of the community members, frequently women who saved the house years before. The ‘interpretation only’ category considers this same information, but without the material culture of the plaque.

The ‘donation/plaque’ and ‘donation only’ categories are the interpreter stating who donated the house to the preservation society and/or state entity, but

no further information about how the organization saved the home. Preservation societies, especially those of the late nineteenth/early-to-mid twentieth century, were frequently women's organizations. These organizations formed, raised money from both state and local sources, sought and bought artifacts both period and original, and developed an original, informative tour. These women were mostly white and reasonably wealthy. Given how difficult it is to run a historic house museum, public historians should pay homage to the efforts and sacrifice of our foremothers (and forefathers) for spearheading the preservation of the site.

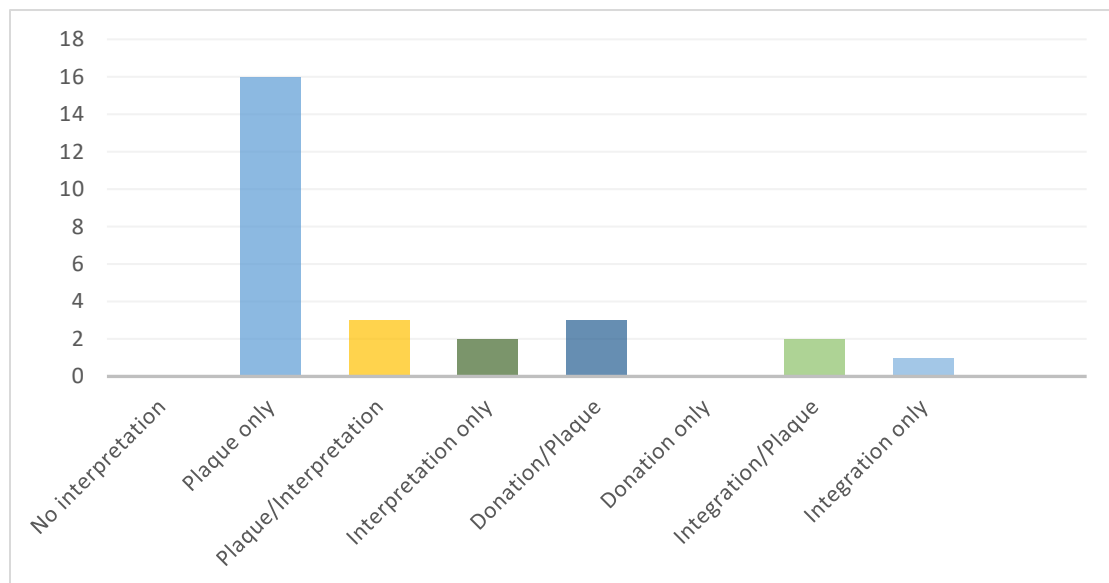


Figure 25: How historic house museums in Tennessee interpret their own preservation

While most homes have some interpretation of their preservation, five historic house museums have it integrated into their tour to varying degrees. (Fig. 25). Blount Mansion and the Mabry-Hazen House, both located in Knoxville, Tennessee, examine their preservation story, but not in a fully integrated manner.

Blount Mansion was built in the 1790s as the home of William Blount, the first governor of the Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio.³ In a pre-tour video, the voiceover discussed the donation of the house to the Daughters of the American Revolution and the descendant Mary Boyd who wrote the first check for its preservation.⁴ The Mabry-Hazen House is a special case. Evelyn Hazen was the last descendant to live in the house, dying in 1987. She left two options in her will: either liquidate the estate and give the proceeds to the humane society or turn the house into a museum.⁵ Obviously, the Hazen Historical Association that formed chose the latter, but while the house is mostly about Ms. Hazen and her ancestors, there is only this little information about the preservation. Preserving a home of this size, with an entire collection of glassware, clothing, period furniture, was a massive undertaking and the society that did it deserves some recognition.

The other three houses that discuss their preservation story are also in Tennessee: Crescent Bend House and Gardens (Knoxville), Davies Manor Plantation (Memphis), and Grassmere Historic Farm (Nashville). The Crescent Bend House and Gardens devotes the Silver Room to discuss their preservation story, and they do this without a historic marker or plaque. The Silver Room holds

³ "History of Blount Mansion," The Blount Mansion Association, Accessed November 20, 2019. <http://www.blountmansion.org/history/history.html>.

⁴ Blount Mansion, Knoxville, Tennessee Field visit October 11, 2018, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

⁵ Mabry Hazen House, Nashville, Tennessee, Field visit September 15, 2018, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

the Armstrong family's extensive collection of silver, including many Hester Bateman pieces, as well as others made by female silversmiths. William P. Toms formed the Toms Foundation and bought the home in the 1970s to save it from being torn down for student apartments by the neighboring University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Even though no women are individually mentioned in this preservation story, because a man was the primary driver, Crescent Bend should be commended for including this preservation story.⁶

Davies Manor Plantation falls in the same line as Mabry-Hazen, although they offer a bit more about how Ellen Davies-Rodgers sought to save her ancestral home. The Shelby County historian for thirty years, Mrs. Davies-Rodgers first restored the home with the help of the Zachariah Davies Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (a chapter she also founded), a fact not mentioned on the tour.⁷ She later established the Davies Manor Association and left them an endowment after her death. The Davies Manor Association still runs the Davies Manor Plantation today, with members of the Zachariah Davies Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution serving as docents.⁸ All of this information is on a historic marker in front of the home, but it is reiterated on the tour as well, showing a deep commitment to their founder, as well as an acknowledgement of her hard work.

⁶ "History of Crescent Bend," Crescent Bend House and Gardens, Accessed November 20, 2019, <http://www.crescentbend.com/about.html>.

⁷ "Davies Manor," Zachariah Davies Chapter – National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, Last updated January 27, 2007, Accessed November 20, 2019, <http://www.tndar.org/~zachariahdavies/>.

⁸ *ibid*

The Grassmere Historic Farm has perhaps the most comprehensive details of their preservation story. Originally built in 1810 and called Grassmere, the last two descendants, Margaret and Elise Croft, lived in the home until 1974 and 1985 respectively. Falling on hard times with the Cuban Revolution (their family fortune was made in sugar and concrete there in the 1920s) and the reclassification of their extensive farm land as commercial, the sisters were no longer able to make the tax payments on their home. They donated their land and home to the Children's Museum of Nashville in a living trust that stipulated that the sisters could remain on the land until their deaths, and the museum would pay the taxes and get the land/house when they passed away. Another provision in this living trust is that the house had to remain there as long as it was feasible, and that the property had to be used for the study of nature and animals. After Elise's death in 1985, the Grassmere Wildlife Park opened in 1990 but subsequently closed in 1995. The city of Nashville then inherited the property and wanted to turn it into a business park. However, the sisters' provisions were legally binding, and the city invited the former Tennessee State Zoo from Lebanon to Nashville, which is why the zoo that is there now is named the Nashville Zoo at Grassmere, in honor of the sisters and their family.⁹

These few examples show a step in the right direction for acknowledging a deep and profound legacy of historic preservation and the women who performed

⁹ Grassmere Historic House, Nashville, Tennessee, Field visit August 24, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

it. They are also samplings of different ways that, with a few tweaks, any small historic house museum can do the same. The following case study of the Ladies Hermitage Association will show a more expansive version of the societal and political effects a preservation society can have on their community.

Tennessee Case Study: Ladies Hermitage Association

The Ladies Hermitage Association (LHA) began in 1889 with a direct connection to the MVLA. According to LHA founding member Mary C.C. Dorris in her excellent history of the preservation of the Hermitage, the idea for the preservation of the building came from Mrs. Amy Ann Rich Jackson, wife of Col. Andrew Jackson III. She knew of the preservation work the MVLA did with Mount Vernon and convinced her husband to visit the Tennessee Vice Regent for the MVLA Mrs. Cynthia Saunders Brown. Mrs. Brown was battling a long illness that ultimately took her life in 1892, so her daughter Narcissa Saunders ultimately received the bylaws and as well as other information about how to form such a preservation society, and Saunders joined the LHA too.¹⁰

Of the four original founders of the Ladies Hermitage Association, only two were female. Col. Andrew Jackson III and Alexander Donelson were heavily

¹⁰ Carol Robertson White, "Cynthia Holland Pillow Saunders Brown," *Find A Grave Database*, Created May 16, 2010, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/52450641/cynthia-holland-brown>; Virginia S. Mylius, "Narcissa Pillow Saunders," *Find A Grave Database*, Created July 10, 2016, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/166761421/narcissa-pillow-saunders>; Mount Vernon Ladies Association, *An Illustrated Handbook of Mount Vernon: The Home of Washington*, Digitized November 19, 2017, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/55997/55997-h/55997-h.htm#c30>; Mary C. Dorris, *Preservation of the Hermitage, 1899-1915: Annals, History and Stories: the Acquisition, Restoration, and care of the home of General Andrew Jackson by the Ladies' Hermitage Association for over a quarter of a century* (Nashville: Ladies' Hermitage Association, 1915), 14 <https://archive.org/details/preservationofthe00dorr/page/14>.

involved in planning and organizing the association. Mary C. Dorris and Amy Rich Jackson were the two ladies of the 'ladies' association. Mary Clementia Currey Dorris became the secretary and later president of the LHA. She was educated at Ward Seminary and later married Duncan Robertson Dorris, editor of the *Nashville American*. She was a founder in two other ladies' organization as well: The Hero of New Orleans Chapter of the Daughters of 1812, and the Cumberland Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). She later became state regent of the Daughters of 1812 and was regent of the Cumberland Chapter DAR. She worked with the LHA in some capacity until her death in 1924.¹¹

As stated previously, Amy Ann Rich Jackson was the wife of Col. Andrew Jackson III. Unfortunately, other than a few mentions of her great support for the formation of the LHA, there is not much extant information about her as an individual. From *Preservation of the Hermitage*, Mary C.C. Dorris writes that she was not a Confederate and was provided with a regular income by the LHA after the death of her husband. She was also a mother to two children, Andrew Jackson IV and Albert Marble Jackson.

The original society was composed almost exclusively of white, wealthy women, apart from Col. Jackson III and Donelson, though they were not on the

¹¹ Susan M. Goodsell, "Mary Clementia Currey Dorris," *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Published October 8, 2017, <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/mary-clementia-currey-dorris/>.

charter.¹² They endeavored to not only save the house, but also to protect the original artifacts contained within. Col. Andrew Jackson III gave them four years to raise the requisite funds to purchase the artifacts, but despite their best efforts they were not able to purchase the collection in full. He subsequently sold the collection in order to pay his debts.¹³ Despite this setback, the LHA remained committed to buying back or seeking the donation of original Jackson pieces. The motivation for saving the Hermitage is complicated. Born out of both patriotic and familial duty, the Jacksons still lived in the Hermitage when they were part of forming the LHA. However, there were financial realities to contend with as well. The Jacksons could no longer afford to live in such a lavish home and had to find a strategy that would honor their ancestor and allow them to have some income.¹⁴

The LHA faced challenges in the political sphere from the outset. Before the LHA got their feet off the ground, State Senator J.M. Crews proposed a bill that would make the Hermitage a Confederate veterans' home, with some support from the state, but mainly worked and managed by the veterans themselves. This idea garnered a lot of support in the postbellum South, and LHA had to convince not only senators but also the public that a historic house museum was the better way to honor President Jackson's legacy. The organization held a community

¹² Mary C.C. Dorris, *The Hermitage: Home of General Andrew Jackson near Nashville, Tennessee* (Nashville, TN: Ladies Hermitage Association, 1928), 19

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015027042202&view=1up&seq=19>.

¹³Dorris, *The Hermitage*, 16.

¹⁴ Dorris, *The Hermitage*, 16; Danielle M. Ullrich, "Let Us Give Them Something to Play With": The Preservation of the Hermitage by the Ladies' Hermitage Association" (master's thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 2015), 4-25

https://jewelscholar.mtsu.edu/bitstream/handle/mtsu/4462/Ullrich_mtsu_0170N_10363.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

meeting, of sorts, bringing together wealthy and well-connected stakeholders, but not those who lived in proximity to the Hermitage. These men and women were generally welcoming to the idea of a memorial to Jackson, but also thought well of a Confederate's home. Senator Crews, who was also in support of a Jackson memorial proposed a new compromise bill: the LHA would receive twenty-five acres of land, the Hermitage itself, and the tombs of General and Mrs. Jackson. This compromise bill passed the state senate on April 5, 1889.¹⁵

From this point on, the LHA managed and interpreted the home of Andrew Jackson. They organized countless fundraisers and solicited donations to restore the home to the days of Andrew Jackson. They did this by acting politically in a multitude of ways: directly lobbying state senators to pass the bill mentioned above, reaching out to other powerful and respected men not in the legislature for help and influence, and most importantly, forming an association to tackle this project head-on. This politicking had a direct effect on the interpretation on display at the Hermitage, namely that the primary story is that of Andrew Jackson: his military career and political actions.

The first primary interpretive strategy at the Hermitage relied heavily on Alfred Jackson, a man formerly enslaved by Andrew Jackson. He still lived at the Hermitage when the LHA purchased the site, and Alfred Jackson was the first volunteer tour guide, telling first person stories of his time at the Hermitage both as a formerly enslaved person, and at the Confederate Soldiers Home at the

¹⁵ Dorris, *Preservation*, 44.

Hermitage. Towards the end of his life, Alfred Jackson was mostly blind, and navigated the house by memory. Once, a member of the LHA moved a bonnet of Rachel Jackson's that Alfred Jackson discussed on his tour, and he became irate that someone had stolen it. Eventually, the matter was smoothed over, but the ladies never moved anything without telling Alfred Jackson again.¹⁶

From the LHA's meeting minutes in those first tumultuous years, it's clear that their interpretative strategy relied on Alfred Jackson. Once the organization became more confident in their abilities to managing the property and the interpretation, they relied on Alfred Jackson less and less. Alfred Jackson died in 1901, but he was ill for over a year beforehand, necessitating the organization to plan for his death. The duty fell to Mary Dorris to organize information into a guidebook, first published in late 1901. The association published an 'inventory of relics' in 1889, but it is not clear if that was for wide dissemination or not.¹⁷

The guidebook published in 1901 described the Ladies' Hermitage Association mission, goals, and their journey to acquire Jackson artifacts. Dorris laid out how the Association came to be, the failed option on the Jackson relics, and the sheer number of fundraising activities the association did to both remain solvent and purchase more Jackson artifacts. From this paragraph alone, a good deal of financial information about the early society can be gleaned. Laying out

¹⁶ Dorris, *Preservation*, 129.

¹⁷ Mary C. C. Dorris, Secretary, *Ladies Hermitage Association Meeting Minutes*, Located at Andrew Jackson Foundation Archive, Accessed December 19, 2019, Relevant dates: September 3, 1889, January 20, 1892, April 4, 1894, September 20, 1894, November 21, 1894, May 23, 1895, October 30, 1895, November 6, 1895, February 5, 1896, August 18, 1897, January 21, 1898, June 7, 1899, February 4, 1901, September 9, 1901.

their successes, and failures, as well as justifying prices for souvenirs, membership and admission fees, all show that the LHA was crucially aware of how, even though they were interpreting the home of a past president, they needed to justify their existence. They also include an epitaph to Alfred Jackson, honoring his guidance in the first interpretation of the Hermitage.¹⁸

This is all in stark contrast to the most recent interpretative plan offered in the Hermitage archives, 2003.¹⁹ This interpretative plan is obviously, miles away better than the piecemeal, decorative arts approach offered in the early years, and it reflects how the public history field grew and matured in the intervening hundred-plus years. The staff and planners identified six themes for the primary interpretation to circle.²⁰ The most relevant one to this study is “Women’s lives and roles during this period.” Further defined, the section states:

Changing roles of women as shown by Rachel Jackson, Sarah Jackson, her daughter Rachel and sister Marion, Emily Donelson, and enslaved women such as Hannah and Betty; the meaning of family for the Jacksons and for slaves; women and religion; foodways; *the work of the Ladies’ Hermitage Association in preserving and creating a past.* [emphasis added]²¹

Despite this commitment to elevate the story of the Ladies’ Hermitage Association, there are scant interpretative mentions of the LHA in the plan. One is in a section on restoration, where there would be photographs and portraits

¹⁸ Dorris, *The Hermitage*, 4-5.

¹⁹ Formations, Inc., *Andrew Jackson’s America: An Interpretative Master Plan for The Hermitage*, National Endowment for the Arts: April 14, 2003, Accessed at the Andrew Jackson Foundation Archive December 19, 2019. At the time of this research, this was the most recent interpretative plan that I was allowed to access.

²⁰ Formations, Inc., 4.

²¹ Formations, Inc., 4.

depicting the restoration of the home over time, as well as educational information about the LHA.²² In multiple visits to the Hermitage (2016-2019, approximately 6), this section has not been in the interpretative center. Alfred Jackson's cabin is offered as another place to discuss the LHA, another missed opportunity.²³

There is no doubt that Andrew Jackson was, and is, a polarizing figure. The public historians at the Hermitage interpret this complex man to an astounding degree, examining Jackson's motivations for various bills and laws, his military career, the crises during his presidency, controversial policies, and personal peculiarities that made him such a controversial person. Happily, the Hermitage also provides a separate audio tour called 'The Rachel Tour' that gives an in-depth examination of the complex woman that Rachel Donelson Jackson was. Two of the most noteworthy spots on 'The Rachel Tour' are the Spring House, where the guide states how Rachel influenced the placement of the Hermitage by wanting the house to be closer to the spring, and she is venerated at the Tomb. 'The Rachel Tour' also mentions African American enslaved women: Rachel's enslaved maidservant, Hannah, whom Rachel loved and treated kindly, as well as the enslaved women who worked in the kitchen. The tour does not cost more, it is available on the same audio device as the regular tour, but the segregation of women's history to a separate tour is not ideal. There is a way for the information to be integrated into the regular audio tour, as not all of the

²² Formations, Inc., 19

²³ Ibid, 25

Rachel Tour stops line up with regular tour stops. While Rachel Jackson is the primary woman interpreted at The Hermitage, she never actually lived at the house that guests now enjoy. Further, the other women who did live there, like Sarah Yorke Jackson, her sister Marion Yorke Adams, and Sarah's daughter Rachel Jackson Lawrence or wife of Colonel Andrew Jackson III, Amy Ann Rich Jackson are not mentioned at all on the tour and their names are only available online.²⁴

It is an unfortunate fact that generally, and in the South in particular, the experiences of African American women during the antebellum period are generalized into the male slave experience. Prior to the 1990s, archaeology at the Hermitage had been sporadic and related to the First Hermitage Site, where the Jacksons originally settled in 1804. Whitney Battle-Baptiste in *Black Feminist Archaeology* devotes a chapter of her book to her excavations at the Hermitage and the interpretations of black life there. Battle-Baptiste, using Black Feminist Archaeology as a framework, delved into how the enslaved people at the Hermitage interacted with and used the landscape. Her work is an example of the ongoing preservation efforts funded by the LHA and a shift to more fully incorporating both the black experience and the black community surrounding the Hermitage as stakeholders in the process.²⁵

²⁴ "Andrew Jackson's Genealogy," Andrew Jackson's The Hermitage, <https://thehermitage.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Andrew-Jackson-Genealogy-Report.pdf>.

²⁵ Whitney Battle-Baptiste, "The Hermitage" in *Black Feminist Archaeology*, (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2011).

Dr. Larry McKee and Whitney Battle-Baptiste influenced the 2003 interpretative plan at the Hermitage by the research documenting the archaeology of the enslaved quarters. McKee was one of the scholarly researchers involved in framing the interpretative plan, and the section on the field quarters is where the primary archaeological themes are addressed. The interpretative plan, like Battle-Baptiste's work, specifically mentions that they want the Hermitage to work with the local African American community to develop an interpretative strategy, including things like "Hands-on activities, to be developed in consultation with the African American advisory committee, honor the strength, persistence, and resistance of enslaved people at The Hermitage, as revealed by archaeological finds."²⁶ Again, from multiple visits, that section was not present. Battle-Baptiste's work clearly influenced the framers of the interpretative plan, but the practice of putting it into place has lagged.

The LHA is an important historic preservation society that did a significant amount of preservation to save not only the Greek Revival mansion, but also the grounds and outbuildings that surround it.²⁷ Despite this, on the provided audio tour at Andrew Jackson's The Hermitage, there is no mention of the actual 'ladies' of the Ladies Hermitage Association. On the tree-lined walk to the mansion, at each tree are signs stating the species and that they were planted by the LHA, and that is the extent of their representation on the grounds. In the

²⁶ Formations, Inc., 28.

²⁷ Ullrich, 30.

house, the story is the same. This begs larger questions: who were these women over the years and how did they evolve the interpretation?

One reason the LHA may not be interpreted at Andrew Jackson's The Hermitage is because of an administrative change. In 2014, the organization was "rebranded" from the Ladies' Hermitage Association to the Andrew Jackson Foundation. Along with this rebranding came new, well-known board members like Pulitzer-prize winning historian Jon Meacham, and NPR's Mara Liasson. One news article at the time headlined the change as "Putting Jackson back at the Hermitage."²⁸ The Andrew Jackson Foundation and the public historians who work there have every right to interpret the story of Andrew Jackson and the Hermitage whatever way they see fit. Not giving any context or information about the LHA at the actual site serves as a symbolic erasure of the women of LHA's work in saving the very home being interpreted.

²⁸ Scott Stroud, "Putting Jackson back in the Hermitage," *The Tennessean*, October 2, 2014 <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2014/10/02/foundation-moves-put-jackson-back-hermitage/16584039/>; "The Hermitage/Andrew Jackson Foundation," *GuideStar by Candid*, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/62-0478087>.

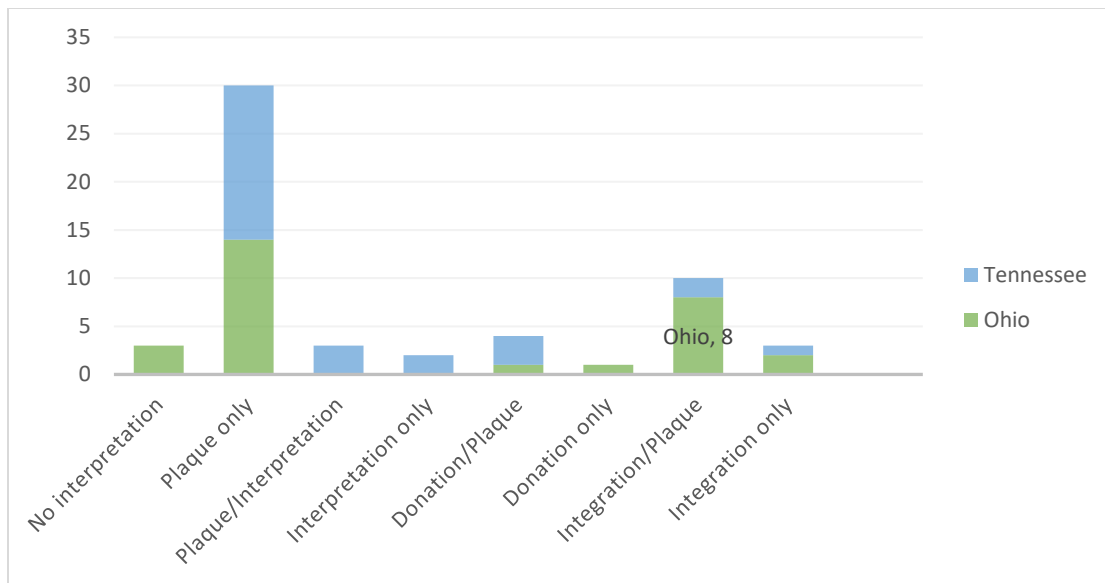


Figure 26: Comparison of preservation representation in Tennessee and Ohio

Ohio Preservation Data

The data shows that for the selected sites in Ohio, there is more integration of the preservation story there than in Tennessee (Fig. 26). While not all the homes interpret their preservation, twice as many integrate their preservation story into the tour in Ohio than in Tennessee. This wealth of information then provides far more tactics for other historic house museums to integrate their preservation story into the tour, and by doing so acknowledge the community efforts brought forward to save the houses.

Old Stone Academy in Zanesville, Ohio is set up more like a museum. This reflects the building's history as it was originally a school, briefly a statehouse, and then finally a private home. Stone Academy presents the various lives this building had by discussing all five owners, including the donation of the home by the last descendant Lydia McHenry Taylor to the preservation society.

Muskingum County Historical Society's continuing work on preserving the home and telling diverse stories of those who lived and interacted with the building, in all its iterations, is an excellent way to balance the gender interpretation. By interpreting Old Stone Academy's full history, rather than focusing on a particular period, the Muskingum County Historical Society is able to incorporate both the white female and African American female experience of Zansevillians into their interpretation. These include stories like those of Nelson and Maria Gant, a formerly enslaved man who attempted to free his enslaved wife via the Underground Railroad. When they were caught, Maria was pressured to testify against him, but asserted that she could not testify against her husband. This case thus recognized, and legalized, their slave marriage, and the case against her husband was dismissed. The outcry in favor of the Gants allowed them to raise the \$900 for Maria's release and they moved to Zanesville, where Nelson had stayed immediately after he was freed. Old Stone Academy thus interprets Zanesville history, rather than just the history of a particular family or event, creating for a richer interpretation, and a richer preservation story as well. This information is all conveyed via text panels, thus showcasing a way that historic house museums can tell diverse stories without relying on a guide.²⁹

Wolcott House, located in Maumee, Ohio, is set up like a traditional historic house museum. Focused on telling a story about the Ohio frontier in the

²⁹ Old Stone Academy, Zanesville, Ohio, Field visit June 8, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

early nineteenth century, the majority of the home is organized around the male experience, despite the fact that Mary Wells Wolcott inherited the money her husband used to buy the land in Maumee, making them wealthy and respected. Mary Wells Wolcott was the granddaughter of Chief Little Turtle, so she was a prestigious woman in her own right, but the dynamics of Native- European interactions in this frontier area are not explored to their fullest potential, especially in regard to Native women and their occupation of the middle ground.³⁰

Rilla Hull was the granddaughter of Mary Wells Wolcott and the last descendant to live in the house. Even though she lived her last years in “abject poverty,” she made sure to donate the home, rather than sell it and live more comfortably. After her death in 1957, the house first went to the Episcopal Church and they subsequently gifted it to the Wolcott Historical Society in the 1960s. The interpreter was most effusive over Hull’s selflessness in making sure that the home, originally built in 1836, became a public building and was maintained for future generations.³¹ This reverence for donators or progenitors of historic societies is a theme that is present in both Ohio and Tennessee.

The Betts House, in Cincinnati, Ohio, is an exemplary case of showcasing active preservation. Owned and managed by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, the Betts House was originally built in 1804 and is the oldest brick house in Cincinnati. Their preservation story is emblematic of many historic

³⁰ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, empires, and republics in the Great Lakes region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 74

³¹ Hull-Wolcott House, Maumee, Ohio, Field visit May 4, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

house museums: descendant led. Martha Tuttle, a member of the Colonial Dames and daughter of Florence McCrea Benedict, the last Betts descendant born in the home, led the effort to have the Colonial Dames purchase and interpret the home. Tuttle raised the money to purchase the home from the city and the society continues to maintain it. An oil painting of her, as well as further information about her efforts to save the Betts House, hangs prominently in the hallway, another low-budget way to honor the women in the preservation story. Also unique, is their use of large black dashes on the floor and walls, to show where old walls/windows were, thus interpreting a past period after the house had been updated.³²

Dunham Tavern served as a waystation for travelers and a home for the Dunham family in early-nineteenth century Cleveland, Ohio. It was a private residence for a period of time, then became property of the Works Progress Administration, and they used it as a studio for artists and writers. The Society of Collectors became interested in the building in the 1930s, particularly sisters Delia Holden White and Roberta Holden Bole.³³ These sisters led the charge in saving the house, and convinced the Society to buy the home and open it as a museum, and the same society, renamed Dunham Tavern Historical Society, continues to maintain it today.³⁴ The guide here also expressed a reverence for

³² Betts House, Cincinnati, Ohio, Field visit May 24, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

³³ Auto Graver, "Delia Bulkley Holden White" *Find A Grave Database*, Added October 10, 2011, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/78168935/delia-bulkley-white>.

³⁴ Dunham Tavern, Cleveland, Ohio, Field visit May 15, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

Mrs. Windsor White and Mrs. Benjamin Bole, as they were called and their photographs labeled. Despite this reverence, the guide did not know their first names, another frequent occurrence at historic homes.

Hanby House, the home of Benjamin Hanby and an abolitionist hub on the Underground Railroad, again integrates their preservation into the story of the home. In 1929, Dacia Custer Shoemaker wrote her thesis on the Hanby House for Otterbein University. She fell in love with the house, so for her birthday that same year, her husband bought her the house to save it from further disrepair. It was her efforts as well, that got the WPA involved to move the home to its present location in Westerville, closer to the university, rather than farther out in the countryside. While there were no photographs of Shoemaker, a progression of photos from the 1930s show how they moved the historic home in that time period, a herculean feat in and of itself.³⁵

Both Dunham Tavern and Hanby House are excellent examples of OHC managed sites. Both examine the history of their respective sites into the future, with both sites naming their preservation societies, and telling details of their own preservation. While only two of the eight sites that integrate their preservation into the narrative are OHC-run, it is significant that the other five also integrate their preservation without the direct influence of the Ohio History Connection.

³⁵ Hanby House, Westerville, Ohio, Field visit May 18, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

The Kelton House and Gardens was a partially descendant-led effort. Grace Kelton stipulated in her will that her ancestral home would be open for any group to take over and run for six months, but after that it would be bulldozed to make room for a public park. The Junior League of Columbus stepped in the day before it was to be demolished and took it on as their office and historic house museum. While not much else is given about the Junior League itself, Grace Kelton is described as an eminently practical woman, who did not want her home to fall into disrepair, thus the stipulation in her will.³⁶

An example of a slight preservation story integration is Glendower Mansion in Lebanon, Ohio. The last owner of the home Ladora Scoville Owens died in 1948, and she left the home to her daughter and son-in-law. Tragically, her daughter vaudevillian Bessie Owens Wendt, died that same year, so the son-in-law decided that the best course of action was to sell the house to city. He made the decision to sell it for the original purchase price of the home in 1838 (\$10,000), rather than its assessed value ninety years later, both so the city could afford to buy it and also then run it as a museum. While there is no further information about how the Warren County Historical Society then acquired it, acknowledging the first steps in the preservation process is an excellent start.³⁷

Two examples of sites that integrate their preservation story into the tour but do not have a designated historic marker or plaque are Prospect Place Estate

³⁶ Kelton House, Columbus, Ohio, Field visit May 18, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

³⁷ Glendower Mansion, Lebanon, Ohio, Field visit June 9, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

(Trinway, Ohio) and Marietta Castle (Marietta, Ohio). Prospect Place Estate is still under deep reconstruction but was open on Saturdays during the summer. Because their preservation efforts are ongoing, they are afforded a unique opportunity to interpret their preservation as it is happening. There were two phases of preservation, both organized by men. The first iteration was initiated by Dave Longaberger, creator of the Longaberger Basket Company. Unfortunately, he became ill and passed away thus was unable to fully restore the home like he did to other historic homes in the area. Its second iteration came with a descendant who purchased the home and set up the G.W. Adams Educational Center to purchase and interpret the house, which still runs it today.³⁸

Marietta Castle's preservation story is fully integrated into their guided tour. Originally built in 1858, brother and sister team Stewart and Dr. Bertlyn Bosley, bought the house at auction in the 1970s with the intent to live there as a private residence. As such, they put in modern amenities, like a handicap accessible bathroom and elevator, while also maintaining historic features. Dr. Bertlyn Bosley was the first woman to receive a Ph.D. in nutrition from Columbia University in 1943 and had an extensive library.³⁹ She also had Parkinson's Disease, which necessitated the addition of a handicap accessible features, a boon to the later preservationists, who can then use those features for public

³⁸ Prospect Place Estate, Trinway, Ohio, Field visit June 8, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

³⁹ "Families – Castle Owners – Dr. Bertlyn Bosley," Marietta Castle, <https://mariettacastle.org/about/families/#bosley2>.

interpretation. They both died before completing their full restoration, and the Betsy Mills' Corporation bought the home and currently runs it as a historic house museum.⁴⁰

From these small case studies, there are generally two themes that emerge: descendant-led preservation and community-led preservation. Both are equally important, but there seems to be more reverence by later interpreters in homes that are preserved by descendants. This could be because the organization then feels it has a direct connection to the family that originally stayed in the house, thus making the interpreters feel like they are a part of the extended family network.

Ohio Case Study: Fairfield Heritage County Association

As a smaller county-based historic preservation organization, the Fairfield County Heritage Association (FCHA) worked to save historically significant homes in Fairfield County, Ohio, mostly focused on the county seat of Lancaster. The driving engine behind the formation of a historic preservation society in Fairfield County was Ruth Wolfey Drinkle. In 1962, she and six other women formed the Fairfield Heritage Association, later merging with the Fairfield County Historical Society in 1968.⁴¹ This action brought more resources and more work, and the women began a historic building survey of all the homes and buildings

⁴⁰ Marietta Castle, Marietta, Ohio, Field visit June 4, 2019, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

⁴¹ "History of Fairfield Heritage Association," Fairfield County Heritage Association, Accessed November 10, 2019, <https://www.fairfieldheritage.com/History-of-Fairfield-Heritage-Association.html>.

built before 1900. After this work was completed, Drinkle published their findings in *Heritage of Architecture and Arts in Fairfield County, Ohio* in 1978.

During this time period, the FCHA raised funds for restoration projects of architecturally significant homes, gave tours of those homes, and raised awareness of their organization. Once they raised enough funds, the organization purchased the Daniel Sifford Home, now known as the Georgian Museum.⁴² The FCHA also wrote and received grants for downtown revitalization and to record oral histories with older community members through the Columbus Foundation and Frederick Ruffiner, respectively.

In 1982, the women of the FCHA successfully maneuvered the sale of the William Tecumseh Sherman Home from the state to their organization. This is one of the few examples of a historic house museum being transferred back to a local organization with the intention of the home remaining a museum. Since then, the FCHA run both the Georgian Museum to discuss early nineteenth century decorative arts and the Sherman House to celebrate the life of William Tecumseh Sherman.⁴³

Ruth Wolfey Drinkle was a fascinating woman in her own right. She was born in Prospect, Ohio in 1903 and was very athletic. She attended Ohio Wesleyan University and first studied English, later changing her major to Physical Education. Following her graduation from OWU, she spent a summer in

⁴² “History of Fairfield County Heritage Association,” <https://www.fairfieldheritage.com/History-of-Fairfield-Heritage-Association.html>.

⁴³ Ibid.

Europe, which first sparked her love of history and architecture. She then taught physical education for a few years before marrying Charles Henry Drinkle in 1928. She had two children, and when they graduated from college, the family took a summer trip to Europe. She was very impressed that the various countries had managed to so carefully preserve their historic buildings, including the ones that had been destroyed by the Second World War. She also noticed that her family were not the only Americans coming to Europe during this time period and thought that the United States should preserve their cultural heritage as well, thus sparking the idea for the Fairfield Heritage Association.⁴⁴

The FHA was originally a women's organization and the other six women were Marian Beery Furniss (1903-1983), Dorothy Bell Whiley Peters (1891-1991), Caroline Peters Rockwood (1929 -) Mary "Petie" Eunice Peters Smith (1918-2008), Mary Kathryn Hurst Vlerebome (1909-2001), and Emile Giese Martin (1905-1982).⁴⁵ All of these women were united in their love of antiques as well as race and socioeconomic status. Much the same as the LHA, and many other nineteenth century historic preservation societies, the members of the FHA were exclusively white and overwhelmingly affluent.

Like the Hermitage, both the Sherman House and the Georgian Museum do not discuss their preservation story in the permanent exhibit. The Georgian Museum happened to have a temporary exhibit on Ruth Wolfley Drinkle when I

⁴⁴ Personal correspondence with Joyce Harvey, curator of Georgian Museum, November 15, 2019.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

visited on May 5, 2019 and the exhibit ran through June 30 of that year. The inclusion of their preservation into their interpretation counts for twenty percent of the mentions of women on their tour, showing that including the preservation story increases female representation in some historic house museums.

Importance of Preservation Networks

There are many ways that women have contributed to history, but historic preservation is the avenue analyzed here. My research has shown one component to increased representation of preservation, and thus of women, is to have a robust preservation network in the state. The existence of organizations like the Ohio History Connection (OHC) and Ohio Local History Alliance (OLHA) create a community of support at both the state and local level for organizations to rely upon. While Tennessee has the Tennessee Historical Commission (THC), the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities (APTA), and the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH), THC and APTA do not serve the same function as OHC, and AASLH has a more national focus.

OHC owns twelve of the twenty-nine sites I visited in the summer of 2019. This is fundamentally different than the function that THC serves. The Ohio History Connection is a state-wide nonprofit 501©3 history organization that works with local partners to provide technical guidance, financial support, and fulfill research needs. The Ohio History Center houses the official state archives, state historic preservation office, local history office, state museum, conservation and restoration labs, as well as research and design sections for all of the major

areas of Ohio's history.⁴⁶ If the specific site is an OHC-partner, the site are provided OHC services free of charge, as partly funded by the state and through tax-refund donation. Non-partner sites are also welcome to conduct research at the Ohio History Center and can contract with the organization if need be.

Ohio Local History Alliance forms the second of a two-pronged system that provides a strong preservation network. Working with OHC, OLHA has over 300 member-sites that advocate, educate, and communicate local history goals with each other and the wider community. While they work together, (OLHA's offices are in the Ohio History Center, which houses all of OHC) OLHA also provides oversight, and a form of a checks/balance system on local history sites, pushing for best practices from all member sites. They also provide grant money and aid in writing those grants to their members and organizations that are not partnered with OHC.⁴⁷

The Tennessee Historical Commission (THC) was formed in 1919, and functions as a division of the state government, under the umbrella of the Department of Environment and Conservation. THC's focus is as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). They also enter into management agreements with sites, but not as many as in Ohio (more than fifty in Ohio compared to thirteen in Tennessee). Like OHC, THC provides operating grants

⁴⁶ "About Us," Ohio History Connection, Accessed November 10, 2019, <https://www.ohiohistory.org/about-us>.

⁴⁷ "About the Alliance," Ohio Local History Alliance, Accessed November 10, 2019, <https://ohiolha.org/>.

for major maintenance projects with local partner organizations.⁴⁸ These partner organizations do not get much of their budget from THC though, as is the case with OHC.

The fundamental difference between OHC and THC is a centralized versus decentralized model. OHC is highly centralized, with all the necessary resources in one place, while preservation in Tennessee is decentralized. Local organizations at the county or city level perform most of the preservation work at each separate institution. This can give a stronger sense of ownership over their own history and site than the highly centralized model in Ohio. THC as a state agency also does not have the sheer number of staff that OHC employs. This staffing disparity then contributes to the need for a stronger local preservation society and encourages them to look elsewhere for interpretive guidance. THC employs eighteen members of staff, not including the twenty-nine board members, compared to over one-hundred and eighty members of staff at OHC spread across the entire state.⁴⁹

William T. Alderson and Robert M. McBride noted Tennessee's decentralized model in 1965 in their work *Landmarks of Tennessee History*. Their

⁴⁸ "Tennessee Historical Commission," Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.tn.gov/environment/about-tdec/tennessee-historical-commission.html>.

⁴⁹ "THC Staff," Tennessee Historical Commission, Accessed December 17, 2019. <https://www.tn.gov/environment/about-tdec/tennessee-historical-commission/redirect---tennessee-historical-commission/thc-staff.html>; "About Us," Ohio History Connection, <https://www.ohiohistory.org/about-us>.

solution was to provide a series of articles aimed at prominent sites in Tennessee to improve their interpretation. As they state:

The Tennessee Historical Commission has long recognized the need for improving the interpretation of the network of historical landmarks owned or aided by the State of Tennessee but operated by independent associations and societies. It has also recognized that many of these sites have limited budgets that make it impossible for them to do all the things that are necessary if the job is to be done well. The Commission and the Tennessee Historical Society were both very receptive in 1960 when the editor of the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* proposed a multi-purpose series of articles on the major Tennessee historical landmarks that are restored and regularly open to the public. The proposal was that each issue of the *Quarterly* contain an article dealing with one of these sites, and that these articles contain photographic illustrations and also be showing in original art work [sic] on the cover. Each article would attempt to tell how the site had been acquired and restored for public use and how it appears to the visitor today. These articles would, of course, reach the more than one thousand members of the Tennessee Historical Society. In addition, the sites themselves would be given the opportunity of purchasing reprints of the articles for distribution to their visitors, and at a fraction of the cost of an originally produced booklet. Finally, it was the hope that the articles might some day [sic] be brought together in book form, in order to reach a great many other people with the story of Tennessee's historic sites. This volume is a partial realization of the last-mentioned objected.⁵⁰

Seven of the homes visited for this study are included as preservation articles in *Landmarks of Tennessee History*. Of those seven (Belle Meade Plantation, The Hermitage, Cragfont, Oaklands Mansion, Blount Mansion, James K. Polk Boyhood Home, and Carter House) only two (The Hermitage and Blount Mansion, both profiled above) have any mention of their preservation story in their public facing interpretation. Alderson, the director of the American Association for State and Local History in the 1960s and a leader in the field of

⁵⁰ William T. Alderson and Robert McBride, *Landmarks of Tennessee History* (Nashville, TN: Williams Printing Co., 1965), ix.

museum studies, recognized the need for public historians to interpret their own stories fifty-five years ago, right as new social and cultural history were developing, putting him on the cutting edge of this field. It begs the question that if these sites have had access to an extensive history of their own preservation, why is that history not included in their interpretation in the present? While it is highly unlikely that sites have chosen to ignore this excellent research, it's fair to assume that this publication languished in various archives, filing cabinets, or desk drawers, as daily stresses continued to gather upon these public history professionals.

One of those articles examined Belle Meade Plantation, and their preservation story is tied to one of the most notable names in the suffrage movement: Anne Dallas Dudley. In the parlance of that time, Mrs. Guildford Dudley, Sr. led the suffrage movement both in Tennessee and nationally, and later helped form the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities, specifically to save Belle Meade Plantation in 1953.⁵¹ Dudley founded the Nashville Equal Suffrage League, served as president of the Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association, and vice president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.⁵² At the time of the field visit, there was no mention of

⁵¹ Carole Stanford Bucy, "Anne Dallas Dudley," *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Tennessee Historical Society, last updated March 1, 2018, <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/anne-dallas-dudley/>; Alderson, *Landmarks*, 43.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Anne Dallas Dudley or of the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities, which is still headquartered at Belle Meade Plantation.⁵³

Based on my conversations with site interpreters in both states, site interpreters in Tennessee do not rely on THC in the same way the site interpreters in Ohio rely on OHC. Analyzing the importance of statewide preservation was not the focus of my study, so the data is anecdotal, but examining the two systems points out striking differences in the centralized vs. decentralized approach to preservation that is utilized by each network. THC plays a more distant role in the daily lives of interpreters because interpreters do not expect THC to give them the kind of top-down direction that interpreters in Ohio expect from OHC, and indeed that is not THC's role in the state. The conversations with twenty-first century interpreters in Tennessee, coupled with the preservation data, thus reinforces what Alderson and McBride noted and attempted to correct in the twentieth, sites still need some guidance in interpreting their own institutional history.

In the intervening years, numerous other preservation aid networks formed in Tennessee, far more than the two in Ohio. The Center for Historic Preservation, Tennessee Association of Museums, the Middle Tennessee State University Public History program and the East Tennessee Historical Society all provide interpretive guidance to sites when they are asked, though ETHS was founded in 1834. All these organizations then push for best practices in interpretation, but

⁵³ "Welcome to the APTA," Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities, <https://www.theapta.org/>; Belle Meade Plantation, Nashville, Tennessee, Field visit Fall 2017, Notes filed in Tennessee Historic Sites Survey Collection, Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

there is no accountability after the initial work is done. Sites are free to adjust the interpretation as needed. This local approach can be very beneficial for sites themselves, as they then can control the narrative, rather than having directives come from the state. The culture of preservation is fundamentally different in Tennessee, far more local and independent-minded. There are benefits and disadvantages in this approach, just as there are benefits and disadvantages in the centralized nature of preservation in Ohio.

However, it is clear that the strong culture and top-down nature of preservation in Ohio leads to an increase in the substantive mentions of women there. While Tennessee overall acknowledges their preservation with more plaques, Ohio integrates the preservation story, and the individuals involved, into the regular tour thereby underscoring the importance of historic preservation not only to the house, but to the community at large. This, in turn, leads to more mentions of white women, as they were the usual drivers of historic preservation in these communities.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

From my experience using Shrum's Gender Matrix, research in academia, and touring nearly sixty historic house museums in about a year, I've compiled four general recommendations that when taken together will greatly improve the representation of women in historic house museums. They are: *acknowledge current representation to make institutional change, conduct research, recognize the gendered past, and interpret use*. While these are not the only changes that historic house museums can make to improve their representation of women, they are a start, garnered from careful research and data-gathering.

All these suggestions are meant to be low-cost. This study is for sites without a million-dollar budget, and for those that may not know where to turn for interpretive guidance. Most of the recommendations come down to linguistic shift: changing the way historians talk about women of the past in the present. This section offers advice for reckoning with the language and how to create a more holistic image of historic women.

In addition to the suggestions provided below, all of the sites consulted in the completion of this project have the opportunity to receive free Gender Matrix reports like those in Chapter III. The goal for this research is to work with sites to create the best version of their individual story. While there are opportunities for improvement across all sites, each historic house museum had individual strengths in interpretation, education, and management style. Each site, and story, is unique and deserves my heartfelt thanks.

Acknowledge Current Representation to Make Institutional Change

The most important step in addressing issues in women's representation in historic house museums is to admit that women are poorly interpreted in historic house museums. There are multitude of reasons for this. One of the most important is the legacy of patriarchal ideas that have their roots in the founding of historic house museums. The women of the MVLA, LHA, and other organizations like them acted in political ways to both uphold and subvert the social order. As West stated in *Domesticating History*, historic house museums have always been political.¹ These women moved to preserve historic homes because it was just that – an extension of the home, therefore a place where their activity was sanctioned. They subverted the social order in maintaining control over them, whether financially or through the interpretation. Despite this, these women were of a time when men's opinions and values were more important than their own. This leaks into the interpretation, because how could it not? History has frequently only recorded the deeds of Great Men, ignoring the roles of women in the background. The patriarchal underpinnings start here, and influence interpretation today, as the stories historic house museums tell all too frequently revolve around men and their deeds.

The influence of the patriarchy is particularly interesting as the public history field has more women than men, bringing with it a change to how we

¹ Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington: Smithsonian University Press, 1999), xi.

interpret our own history. This began with second wave feminism in the 1960s-70s, carrying on to today. Despite the influence of feminism, most historic house museums have an image problem. Many have argued that they are outdated, there are too many, and they all tell the same story.² Some of this may be true. Historic house museums also struggle with attracting a younger visitor base. Millennials (those aged between 23-38 in 2019) make up the largest population segment in the country, yet historic house museums have consistently ignored the needs of these adults, either focusing on older adults or young children.³ Part of this is caused by a generational bias, as the Andrew Mellon Foundation found in 2015 that the majority of art museum workers are older and white, and that majority of visitors to all museums are overwhelmingly white.⁴ It is natural that this closed loop of whiteness would reinforce itself, workers are responding to what their visitors want, and their visitors look like them. Since that 2015 study, the Andrew Mellon Foundation updated that study in 2018, and found that gender and race representation in art museums has increased in the intervening years.⁵

² Ruth Graham, "The great historic house museum debate: Do we have too many? The surprising fight over a quirky, dusty, and endangered American institution," *The Boston Globe*, August 10, 2014, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2014/08/09/the-great-historic-house-museum-debate/jzFwE9tvJdHDCXehIWqK4O/story.html>.

³ Michael Dimock, "Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins," *Pew Research Center*, January 17, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

⁴ Roger Schonfeld, Mariët Westermann, with Liam Sweeney, "The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation: Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey," *The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation*, July 28, 2015, https://mellon.org/media/filer_public/ba/99/ba99e53a-48d5-4038-80e1-66f9b1c020e/awmf_museum_diversity_report_aamd_7-28-15.pdf.

⁵ Mariët Westermann, Roger Schonfeld, and Liam Sweeney, "Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey 2018," *The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation*, January 28, 2019, https://mellon.org/media/filer_public/e5/a3/e5a373f3-697e-41e3-8f17-051587468755/sr-mellon-report-art-museum-staff-demographic-survey-01282019.pdf.

White workers at museums must recognize their cognitive bias in interpreting only the “Big House” family. At plantation museums, African Americans outnumbered the white family in more cases than not, yet the interpretation of the enslaved experience is lacking. Recognizing that there is a problem of our own making, reinforced by years of systematic oppression of women and of people of color, is the first step in knowing that a change is necessary.

Once workers acknowledge the problem of both race and gender representation in their museums, they can work to fix it. The Shrum Gender Matrix is an excellent tool in laying bare both the inconsistencies as well as the strengths in interpretation. The Matrix is designed to diagnose the problem and using it in cooperation with interpreters and boards can show them what they are doing well and what might need work. Sites should be commended for trying, and the Matrix can show where the strengths in interpreting women are in a specific narrative. Using the Matrix requires a recognition of institutional change, something that many boards might be hesitant to do.

There are multiple other resources that sites can utilize to improve their interpretative practices. AASLH’s Standards and Excellence Program (StEPs) has sections specifically for interpretation, as well as institutional practice. StEPs also has certification levels for each section, giving sites the opportunity to tangibly show their improvement. While this program is costly, they do provide a nationalized set of guidelines for museums and historic sites in many different

areas of research and governance. The National Association for Interpretation's *Journal of Interpretative Research* provides original empirical research about interpretation and all issues are available for free download as PDFs. Another excellent resource is *How to Connect Hearts and Minds to Places, Objects, and Resources* edited by David L. Larsen and also available for free online.

All of these resources lead to institutional change. None of these changes, either in this section or the next four, should be taken lightly or without serious planning. Creating an interpretative planning document to guide your institution in these new changes will be critical for both creating a new direction as well as maintaining the new course. The first step will be to revise your mission statement to include more diversity in the narrative, opening the door for more diverse stories within the institution's tour, like those who have been historically marginalized: women, free or enslaved, black or white or Native. This process will be individualized to each institution, but the change must happen over time. This gradual change, usually between three to five years, should include engagement with the community about the new direction and new stories to be told as well as the advice of consulting firms, historians, and community organizers.

Conduct Research

Conducting research is the most labor-intensive suggestion, and it does not always come easily. Many public historians love to research, but the demands of running a historic site means that research generally falls by the wayside as giving

tours, doing the books, and creating educational programming take precedence. The advice in this section recognizes that many professionals have precious time, and these tricks can help researchers make the most of it.

As acknowledged in the Oaklands Mansion case study, sometimes conducting research on historical women is hampered by a lack of primary source documentation. This can partially be solved by a public plea: women's history, especially that of African American women, lives in the attic, not the archive. Asking the public if they have information, not just about the site or a person, but about their families during whatever time period allows for a degree of shared authority in creating a public narrative. This strategy also has the added benefit of adding to the archive women's stories that are not frequently told.

A second strategy for conducting research without much primary source documentation is to look for analogs. While not much might have been saved about the family at one site, they may have interacted with others around them. Reach out to other historic house museums in the area, or from an academy that woman might have attended, to see if she is present there. Women of the nineteenth century were connected through familial, academic, and friendship ties. Pulling on one of those ties can then unleash a wealth of information.

If information about a specific woman is still elusive, the final strategy is one to be used with caution: make comparisons based on historic context. Having basic biographical information about a woman can lead to some assumptions about what her life might have been like based on age, race, and class. Again, as

mentioned in the Oaklands Mansion case study, caveats must be used to show that this information is assumptive (“women like Adeline” “other enslaved servants of this period” and the like). While this strategy is not ideal, it will give a broader historical context to a gendered past and restore women as active participants in the management of the household.

Many sites may be reluctant to stray from their narrative because by providing the historic context the story becomes much grimmer, and even upsetting, to some visitors. This is a completely valid fear, one that is borne out in reviews of traditional big-name house museums that try to tell a more holistic version of the past, like Monticello, Montpelier, McLeod Plantation, and Whitney Plantation.⁶ To combat this fear, interpreters have to walk a very fine line by providing both an accurate portrayal of the past, warts and all, as well as a narrative that will drive visitation. Some of this fear can be mitigated by using the linguistic techniques provided by this study, as well as providing that much needed historic context, addressed more fully in the next section.

One feature of this dissertation is the use of digital resources. The primary research for the case studies, outside of the original site visits, was conducted digitally to show that the resources are available to small and medium-sized historic sites. Digital resources like online state encyclopedias, Ancestry.com and other genealogical sites, FindAGrave.com, Library of Congress subject databases,

⁶ Hannah Knowles, “As plantations talk more honestly about slavery, some visitors are pushing back” *Washington Post*, September 8, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/09/08/plantations-are-talking-more-about-slavery-grappling-with-visitors-who-talk-back/>.

Newspapers.com, ChroniclingAmerica.org, and various academic institutions online databases were invaluable in crafting a gender-centered narrative for the case studies sites. In addition to the resources listed above, making your own institution's digital presence a comprehensive one is another way that historians can create more detailed and context-driven content about their individual site. While this is a separate undertaking, adding gendered content to a blog or Facebook page can also create a discussion with visitors and the institution's greater community, a worthy goal despite its difficulties.

The most comprehensive work on how to conduct research on women's history is the recently published *Doing Women's History in Public: A Handbook for Interpretation at Museums and Historic Sites* (2020) by Heather Huyck.⁷ Huyck lays out point-by-point how to conduct historical research on women at historic sites, both primary and secondary research. The first chapter (and Part I: Significance) justifies women's history significance at historic sites and starts the research process by asking interpreters to come up with questions and list focal women that are or can be interpreted at their site. This first step is crucial for the research process the Huyck then lays out in the next section.

In Chapter 2: Researching Women's History, Huyck explains how to conduct research on historical women, offers tools and tips for organizing that research, and incorporating that research into historic interpretation at museums

⁷ Heather Huyck, *Doing Women's History in Public: A Handbook for Interpretation at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).

and sites. In the following four chapters, Huyck examines various sources that historians can use in researching and interpreting women, including but not limited to, prescriptive literature, organization papers, newspapers, photographs and portraits, oral histories (including a guide on how to conduct an oral history interview), recipes and cookbooks, court and legal records, as well as governmental records. These five chapters constitute Part II: Knowledge Base

Part III examines Tangible Resources, namely the landscape, architecture, objects, and preservation. While those who work in a historic building may already realize the significance of preserving and interpreting the landscape and architecture of their site, it is still incredibly useful to clarify the importance of the tangible resources. All of these parts that Huyck examines: Significance, Knowledge Base, Tangible Resources, form the basis for good interpretation. When all of these disparate parts work together, women's history, and I would argue all history, becomes vibrant and lively at a historic site.

While not exactly a workbook, *Doing Women's History in Public* lays bare the research process in clear detail. The strongest parts of Huyck's work is in how she can elucidate the method of researching women's history that, as practitioners, we might be unable to articulate as succinctly and with the level of detail that she provides. This guide is extremely comprehensive, and I highly recommend any public historian, whether interested in women's history or not, use this work as a guide for researching other historically marginalized groups.

Recognize the Gendered Past

Historians of the nineteenth century know that this time period was highly gendered. While historians have mostly debunked the separate spheres model, the people of the nineteenth century thought of *themselves* as existing in separate spheres. Linda K. Kerber acknowledges this in her article “Separate Spheres.” Factually accurate or not, prescriptive literature of the time encouraged the notion of a woman’s place in the home, and while it may not have played out that way, it’s important to acknowledge where women saw themselves at that time.⁸

This also becomes important when discussing domestic servants, free or enslaved. Pustz, author of *Voices from the Back Stairs*, states that much of the time, domestic servants who worked inside the house, especially attending to white women, were women themselves.⁹ When discussing the work that servants (again, both free and enslaved) did, interpreters either unsexed them using the gender-neutral ‘they’ or deleted them from the interpretation all together, implying that a plantation mistress managing over fifty enslaved people would be cooking meals for the family.

Some historic house museums may know the names of those that worked in the house, if so *use them*. If the historic house museum does not know the names of the workers, acknowledge that, and explain that most domestic servants

⁸ Linda K. Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Role, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History” *Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (June 1988): 9-39.

⁹ Jennifer Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs: Interpreting Servants Lives at Historic House Museums* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

during this time were women. Visitors are more comfortable with ambiguity in the interpretation than public historians think they will be.

Perhaps the best way for interpreters to recognize the gendered past in a historic house setting is to provide context. Vagnone and Ryan recognize this in multiple ways in *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums*. One of the easiest ways to provide more historic context is to Expand the Guest List.¹⁰ By including more people into the interpretation, and not focusing on a singular individual, sites can bring both diversity and controversy to a historic house, which may have the side effect of increasing visitorship. Pustz also advocates expanding the narrative and providing more historic context, but through a class-conscious lens -- discussing women's labor and its centrality to a working home.¹¹

Interpret Use, Not Objects

A more concrete interpretative strategy for historic house museums to improve their representation of women is to interpret use, not objects. All too frequently on tours of historic houses, the interpreters would tell me about where this object, for this example let's say a piano, was built, the story of the company, and how it came to stay at the house, or whether or not the family had a model similar to the one seen here, but nothing about who actually played it. If they did, it was usually just to mention that they were a pianist. Historians such as Jabour

¹⁰ Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast, Inc., 2016), 138.

¹¹ Pustz, 11.

and Margaret A. Nash have shown that women were the primary musical entertainers in the mid-nineteenth century.¹² They attended female academies, and part of their lessons were music, either piano, singing, violin, or some other instrument. Adults would especially welcome young girls into mixed adult company solely for that purpose. Acknowledging that women were the ones who used the pianos, especially young women, gives the guest a brief window into the past: they can envision who played the piano, rather than abstract information about a company.

This builds a more personal connection to the artifacts and the people in the house. When guests are given a clearer picture of an event, perhaps after a dinner party when the young daughter is called into entertain the adults with the results of her lessons, it personalizes that object. Guests can then conjure an image that they have seen many times, either in person or on television: a child's recital, rather than the abstract details of piano building. The other information is important, but if guests want to know about the journey the piano took to get here, they will ask. Fill the house with people, and it will become more personal. If it's only about the objects, it's more sterile.

The best practices in historic house museums embody the principles that this study outlines: acknowledging current bias and representation, conducting research, interpreting use not objects, and recognizing a gendered past. In

¹² Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Margaret A. Nash, "A Means of Honorable Support," *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 53, No. 1 (February 2013): 45-63.

particular, sites that discuss servitude, free or enslaved, like Martin Van Buren National Historic Site (Lindenwald) in Kinderhook, New York and McLeod Plantation in Charleston, South Carolina. Lindenwald met this change head-on when curator Patricia West reorganized the tour to reflect how enmeshed the Irish Catholic servants of Martin van Buren were in the politics of the time – policies he had a hand in making. She used the existing interpretive themes “Martin van Buren, president and statesman” and “Martin van Buren’s life at Lindenwald” to examine how his servants were affected by policies van Buren advocated, like support for a ten-hour work day and elimination of debtors’ prisons. West also used the material culture already present in the home to show how people interacted with them, like cleaning the ornate rugs, to acknowledge the social and gendered stratification within domestic labor.¹³

Public historians and interpreters at McLeod Plantation Historic Site make the focus of their interpretation African American history, specifically that of the Gullah/Geechee culture, as well as the larger history of the house after the antebellum period. In widening the interpretive goals to include the whole history of the house and interpreting the majority of people who lived there instead of the ‘big house’ family, McLeod Plantation interpreters tell a more holistic story. This story includes the enslaved, as well as the USCT troops that lived there during the Civil War, and the later Freedman Bureau’s chapter that

¹³ Patricia West, “Uncovering and Interpreting Women’s History at Historic House Museums” in *Restoring Women’s History Through Historic Preservation*, ed. Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 90.

organized at the site.¹⁴ One specific story about Isabelle Pinckney, an enslaved woman, places her story within the context of the larger slave-owning world – recognizing that her individual experience was typical of an enslaved woman of that time period. Using the word “common”, the interpreters at McLeod Plantation place Pinckney in her historic context – she was the product of an owner and enslaved mother, and was sold to McLeod as a carer for his daughter.¹⁵

These two sites show that shifts in interpretation to create a more holistic story are possible. My research shows that the shift is desperately needed to create a better representation of the past, especially in respect to women and women of color. Historic house museums elsewhere have started to lead the charge, but whether others, especially in Ohio and Tennessee, follow in their footsteps remains to be seen.

¹⁴ “McLeod Plantation Historic Site,” <https://www.ccprc.com/1447/McLeod-Plantation-Historic-Site>.

¹⁵ Cherstin M. Lyon, Elizabeth M. Nix, and Rebecca K. Shrum, *Introduction to Public History: Interpreting the Past, Engaging Audiences* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2017), 120; Rebecca Shrum, “The Matrix for Understanding and Expanding Coverage of Race and Gender in Historic Site Interpretation” (presentation, OZ Arts Nashville, Nashville, Tennessee, April 28, 2016).

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