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# Cornett - Beaumont

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10 July 2014

The Periodic Newsletter on Family History and Genealogy of  
Joseph McClanahan Cornett (1888-1924) and Aloysia "Louie" Beaumont (1891-1943)

Issue number 002

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## The Cornett Quilters

Three generations of a Linn County family were quilters.

*Editor's Note: Reproduced here is an enlightening and very interesting story of three generations (grandmother, mother, daughters) of quilters in Missouri. What makes it relevant here is that the daughters and their father were cousins of Joseph McClanahan Cornett. In addition to the article, and several photos which accompany it, you will find my explanation of the importance of Linn County and the town of Linneus to the Cornett family (page 2), and a chart showing the relationship of these quilters to Joseph Cornett and his descendants (page 4). And by all means see the beautiful quilts on pages 6 and 7. Enjoy!*

Story by Dale Smith  
MIZZOU Alumni Magazine  
Published 12 August 2013

In the northern Missouri town of Linneus, three generations of the Moore and Cornett women witnessed a century encompassing exploration of the Western United States on horseback and travel to the moon on a

rocket ship. But whatever experiences might have separated the generations, quilting links them. Their sewing started of necessity and evolved over the decades into a family tradition. In a way, the women's choices of fabrics, quilt patterns and stitching motifs tell a story of European settlement in Missouri. Made between 1855 and 1940, the 41 quilts in the Moore-Cornett lineage are part of the Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection in MU's College of Human Environmental Sciences.

The story's first thread picks up during the War of 1812, when Joseph Moore of North Carolina was wounded in action. For his service, the government granted him 150 acres in Linn County, Mo., where he settled in 1842 with his first wife, Jane, and their

five children. Joseph was a go-getter, owning a gristmill, starting the local school system and later serving as a judge. Jane died in 1846, and soon after Joseph married Sophia Root, with whom he had four more children.

Surviving on the Missouri frontier required a self-sufficiency that shows through in Sophia's quilts, says Nicole Johnston, the textile collection's archivist. Although steamboats hauled some retail

items into the region, families often relied on what they could produce themselves. "In the earliest days, Sophia used a loom to weave some of the family textiles with yarn that was carded and spun by herself and other family members," Johnston says. "When clothes became too worn or damaged, instead of throwing them away, she used them as pieces for quilts." Faculty member Laurel Wilson, now retired, brought the donated Cornett quilt collection to MU in 1981.

The oldest quilts are utilitarian textiles, made entirely of homespun fabrics in the dark colors of Joseph's suits and Sophia's skirts. Johnston thinks these quilts typically started on top of the bed for warmth during Missouri winters and later were spread beneath the mattress for support and padding.



The cover of the Fall 2013 edition of MIZZOU, the magazine of the University of Missouri Alumni Association, in which this article first appeared. Shown is Bracy Cornett (1885-1967), second cousin of Joseph McClanahan Cornett.



Sophia Root Moore made this twill weave blanket, which might have been used between a quilt and sheet. By hand, she spun the yarn, and joined, hemmed and embroidered the blanket. She might have woven the fabric or hired out that task.

The Moores' daughter Mattie, a second-generation quilter, married fellow Linn Countian William Cornett in 1881. He was 11 years her senior.

About 15 years before William and Mattie married, he went West like many others from his county. He worked for 10 years as a wagon driver in California and another five years as a miner in Colorado. According to a master's thesis by Toni Prawl, MA '86, PhD '94, it's clear from William's letters to Mattie that the couple had sparked several years before he returned home for good. Prawl writes, "He purchased a ring for her but made it clear that they were not engaged yet and offered her a final warning, 'I do remember our understanding, and as I told you, choose better if you can.'" During William's time in Colorado, his mining operations were only moderately successful, but he helped organize the town of Telluride and served as its county commissioner. William also explored the San Miguel Mountains, parts of which yet bear his name — Cornett Gulch, Cornett Creek and Cornett Falls.

William returned home in 1881 long enough to marry Mattie and move the couple to Hutchinson, Kan., where he was trying his hand at the cattle business. Soon they had a daughter, Buena Vista. But raising cattle wasn't panning out any better than mining. Mattie and Buena Vista returned home to Linneus while William arranged to sell the business. His letters to Mattie during this separation included detailed business reporting and sometimes ended in lovesick longing:

*"... Mattie, I have a whole book full of little talk for you when I get home, but I haven't time to write it to you.  
'God bless my wife and baby, and see me safely with them again and as soon as possible,' is my heavenly prayer.  
Goodbye, your loving husband,  
W.L. Cornett  
A thousand kisses for you and baby."*



Buena Vista Cornett

By the time William and Mattie set up a household in 1883, railroads had been bringing ready-made wool and cotton fabrics to Linneus for about 20 years, Johnston says. Mattie's generation had access to more fabrics and brighter colors in prints and designs, which appear in her quilts from this period. Still, sewing clothing and textiles was an important household task, and these showier quilts earned their keep.

The girls learned to sew at an early age. The textile collection includes an unfinished quilt by Buena Vista. "This is called a Crazy Quilt because there's no pattern," Johnston says. "It was a way to use a lot of old clothes and textiles. She was just learning." She dipped into scraps of her grandmother's homespun fabrics, as well as other bits of velvet and silk. In 1891 at age 8, long before



## *The Town of Linneus and Linn County, Missouri in Cornett History*

William Jefferson Cornett (1781-1840) migrated from his native Henrico, Virginia to Lincoln County, Kentucky sometime before 1806, and it was there in 1811 that he married fellow Virginian Nancy Shearer. Why move to Kentucky? Cornett family genealogist Dann Norton has suggested the admittedly romantic theory that "Nancy's family had already left Henrico and moved to Kentucky, and William, desperate, went searching for his true love in the frontier." I like it.

By 1817, William and Nancy had moved to Howard County, Missouri, and were still living there in 1830, when William wrote his will. The Bureau of Land Management has records showing William acquiring land in both Howard and, later, Linn Counties between the years 1824 and 1852, including 200 acres in Linn County. The next two to three generations saw the town of Linneus, and indeed Linn County, become a cluster point for some of the children of William and Nancy, and their offspring.

(A note about Linneus: While it is the County Seat of Linn County, it has always been quite small. Today, it covers 1.08 square miles, and the estimated 2012 population was a scant 273 ! )

William and Nancy had nine children to survive childhood, marry, and have families of their own. It seems as though Linn County became the particular location for the families of at least two of William and Nancy's children:

**William Jackson Cornett** (1817-1874), whose grandchildren were Buena Vista and her siblings. Mattie and William Lewis Cornett's children stayed in Linn County, with Bracy and Winnie living well into the middle of the 20th century there.

**James Mosby Cornett** (1828-1885), the grandfather of Joseph McClanahan Cornett, whose family is the subject of this newsletter. James' son John Jonas Cornett (1861-1915) and all four of his offspring (including Joseph) were born in Linn County. It was sometime after 1899 that John Jonas, his wife Ida McClanahan Cornett, and their four children moved to Texas, though both John Jonas and Ida, after their deaths in Texas, were returned to Linn County for burial.

Records show that all people with last name Cornett buried in Linn County during this time came from one of those two lines. (See the relationship chart on page 5 to see all of these relationships mapped out graphically. Trust me; it's easier to take it all in this way.)

William Cornett's farm and house is now the site of the University of Missouri's Forage Systems Research Center. The 1,200-acre farm, which was acquired by the University in 1965 through a lease agreement with Bracy and Winnie Cornett, was then donated to the University in 1981 upon the death of Winnie. (See an extended discussion about the house on page 8 of this newsletter.)

— GBP

*(Sincere thanks to Dann Norton for his continuous and voluminous assistance in sorting out 18th and 19th century Cornett family history.)*

the days of antibiotics, Buena Vista died of scarlet fever. The family kept her unfinished quilt, now more than a century old.

Two of Buena Vista's younger sisters, Bracy and Winnie, lived into their 80s and produced several decorative quilts that have little in common with the homespun workhorse textiles Sophia sewed when Linneus was a frontier town.

The sisters were well-educated, well-traveled teachers who remained single. They attended the Moore school, went on to the First District Normal School in Kirksville, Mo., and took a chemistry course together at MU in the summer of 1913. As young teachers, both worked in Linn County schools.

Winnie used her professional skills as a sort of ticket across the Western United States. She taught in Iowa, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado and Arizona before earning a bachelor's degree in education from Colorado State Teachers College at Greeley. She returned to Missouri where she taught at Benton High School in St.



*Bracy and Winnie Cornett*



*Moore's daughter Mattie Cornett carried on the family tradition of quilting.*

Joseph, but soon moved on to a high school in Waukegan, Ill., for 16 years. She taught business-related classes, a subject her father thought unsuitable for a woman. A relative of Winnie said, "She chose the life, as we say, of an old-maid school teacher."

Bracy, the more outgoing of the sisters, was one of the first teachers in rural Linn County to include art in the curriculum. In 1926 at age 41, she took a year off to earn a master's degree from Columbia University in New York. She settled in and taught art for 24 years at Northeast Missouri State Teachers College in Kirksville. "Addressed as 'Miss Cornett,' Bracy lived in an apartment that she frequently shared with students. She encouraged many students to continue their programs as she provided rent-free housing for them," Prawl writes.

In the meantime, William passed away in 1929, and Mattie's health deteriorated. Winnie moved back home in 1939 to care for Mattie, who died three years later. Bracy moved home in 1949. The sisters helped their brother, Carl, who had remained in Linneus, run the farm.

The third-generation quilts that Bracy and Winnie sewed are clearly the most

sophisticated in the collection, Johnston says. Not only had the sisters seen something of the world, but the world had also come to Linneus. By then, newspapers were printing full-size patterns that quilters could use time and again.

"The later quilts showed they had access to more colors and more intricate patterns in manufactured fabrics," Johnston says. "They sewed for leisure. They didn't have to spend time spinning and weaving, and so they had time to lavish on fancier quilting techniques.

"But these pieces were hand-sewn down the generations. The women of this family preserved their quilting tradition because they believed it was important. You can see it in their work."

#### CREDITS:

*This article is reproduced here by kind permission of its author, Dale Smith, and the University of Missouri Alumni Association. My sincere thanks to them for that and for their highlighting a sterling moment in Cornett family history. Photographs of the quilts were taken by Rachel Coward and were included in the original article.*

*The historical photos are part of the Cornett family papers at the State Historical Society of Missouri.*

*The Children of William Lewis Cornett (1844-1929) and  
Martha Kansas "Mattie" Moore Cornett (1855-1942)*



PARENTS:

William Lewis CORNETT  
b. 24 May 1844  
Sullivan County, MO  
d. 12 Jun 1929 (age 85)  
Linneus, Linn County, MO

Martha Kansas MOORE  
b. 21 Jan 1855  
Missouri  
d. 11 Nov 1942 (age 87)  
Linn County, MO

married 15 Dec 1881

CHILDREN:

Buena Vista CORNETT  
b. 23 Sep 1882  
Hutchinson, Reno County, KS  
d. 23 May 1891 (age 8)  
Linn County, MO

Bracy Vilas CORNETT  
b. 26 Apr 1885  
Linn County, MO  
d. 4 Jun 1967 (age 82)  
Linneus, Linn County, MO

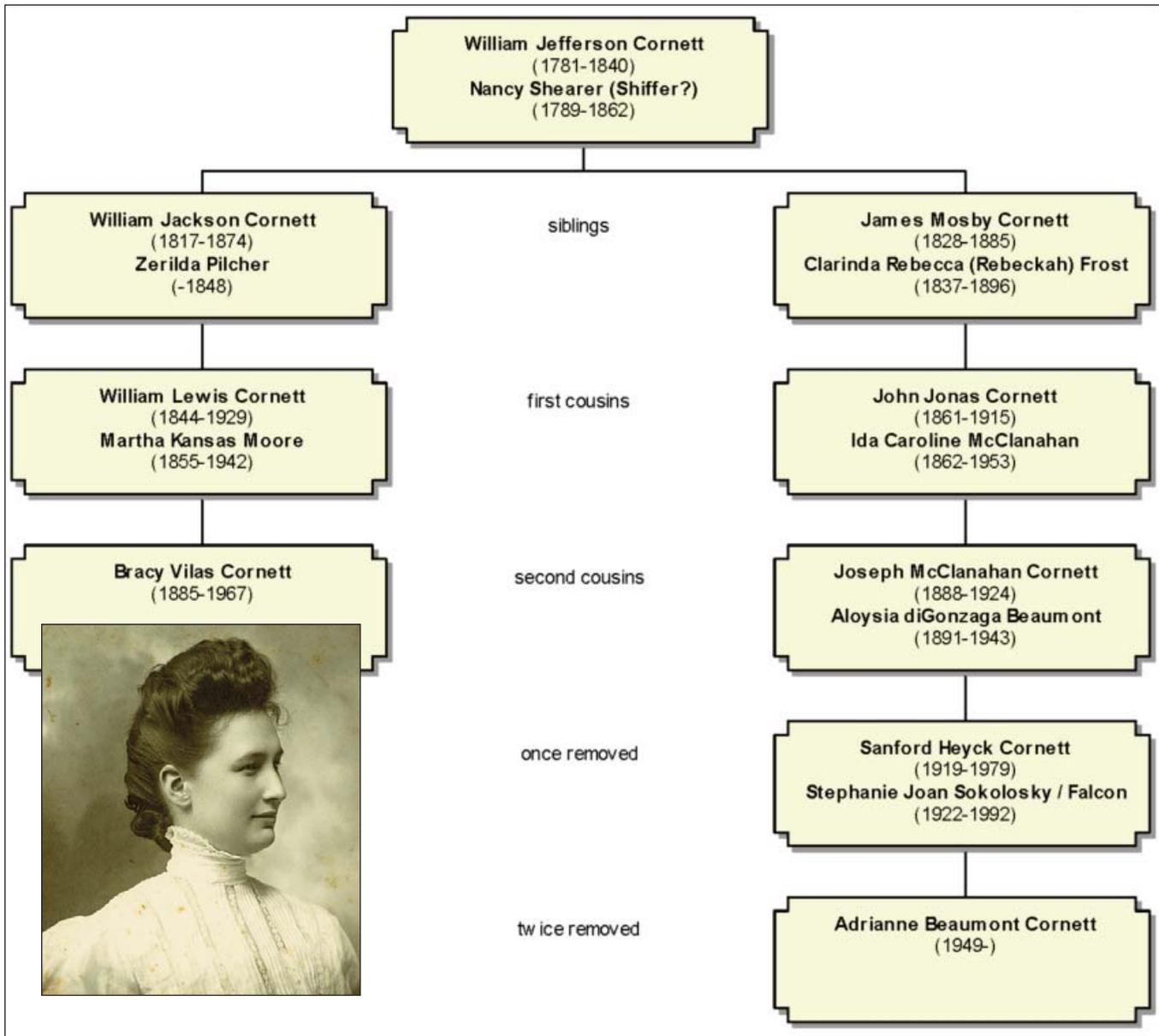
Winifred Davis CORNETT  
b. 19 Feb 1887  
Linneus, Linn County, MO  
d. 13 Oct 1981 (age 94)  
Linneus, Linn County, MO

Carlyle Cleveland CORNETT  
b. 24 Sep 1889  
Missouri  
d. Feb 1964 (age 74)

Josie Lee CORNETT  
b. Mar 1894  
Missouri  
married Walter WOOD  
d. 1970 (age 76)

*The Cornett children, from left, Winnie, Carl, Bracy and Josie, were raised on a Linneus, Mo., farm where quilting was part of family tradition for women.*

Intersection of two family lines: Joseph McClanahan Cornett was second cousin to the quilting sisters, Buena Vista, Bracy, and Winifred "Winnie." By definition, then, their fathers (William Lewis Cornett and John Jonas Cornett) were first cousins. Their common ancestor, William Jefferson Cornett, is the one who moved from Virginia to Missouri, before 1817, ultimately settling in Linn County. He and his wife would have 11 children.



THIS IS NOT AN AD, EVEN THOUGH IT LOOKS LIKE ONE. JUST SOME SARTORIAL INFORMATION (ADVICE?) FOR CORNETTS!



\$24.99 from skreened.com



\$41.50 from zazzle.com



\$16 from idakoos.com



\$30.95 from zazzle.com



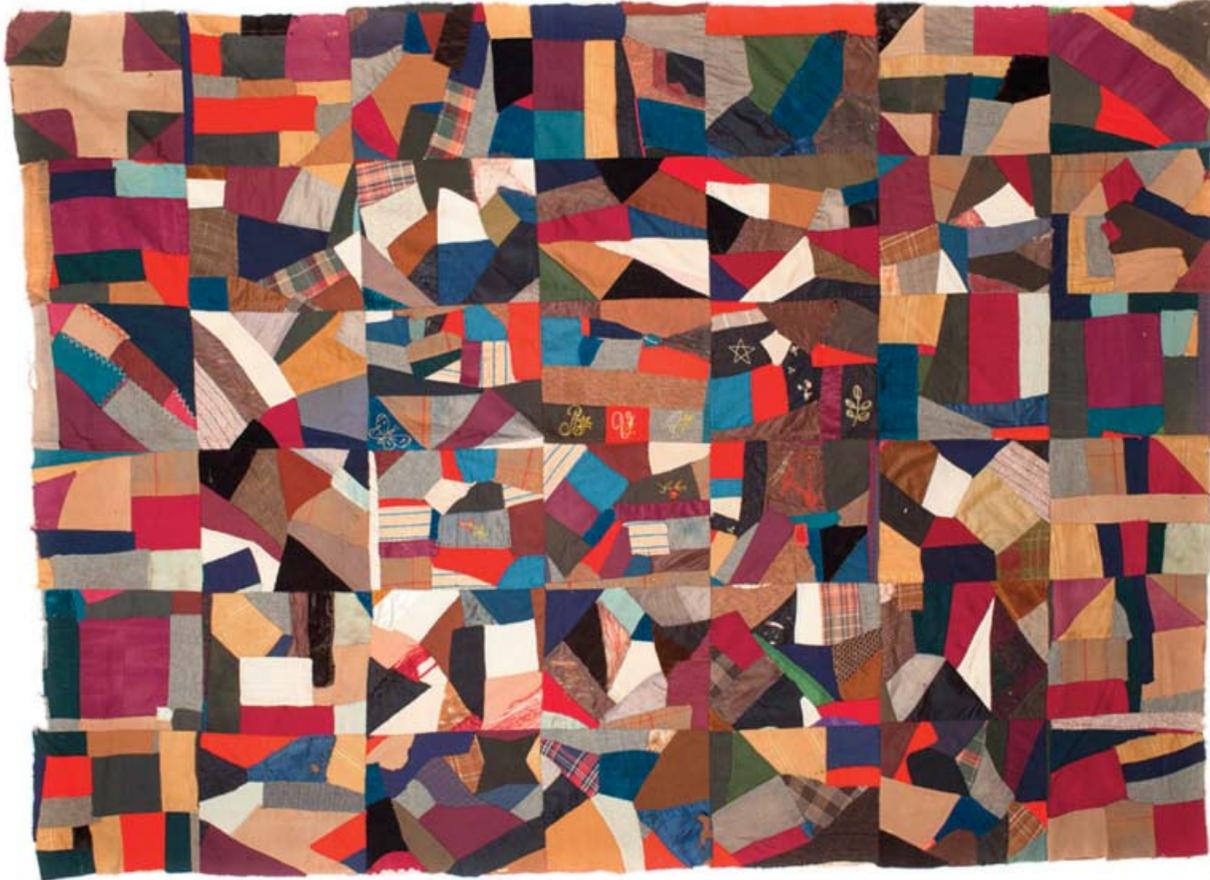
\$30.95 from zazzle.com



\$18 from idakoos.com

## Cornett and Moore Family Quilts

From the Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection of the University of Missouri's College of Human Environmental Sciences



*Crazy quilt, circa 1890  
Buena Vista Cornett started this Crazy Quilt top pattern for practice. She died in 1891 at age 8. Her initials at the quilt top's center (see detail above) might have been added after her death by another family member.*

*Immediately below, details from Buena Vista's Crazy Quilt.*



*Triangle quilt, circa 1850*

*This all-cotton quilt was pieced and quilted by hand, probably by Sophia Root Moore. The individual pieces, which might be a combination of homespun and ready-made fabric, include some traditional men's shirt patterns.*

## EXHIBITION

## THE CORNETTS : Three Generations of Quilting 1850s - 1930s

A unique group of fifty-eight quilts made over 100 years by three generations of women from one Missouri farm family.



Filippello Exhibition Showcase  
Gwynn Hall, University of Missouri

**Exhibition Dates:  
June 9 - August 1, 2014**



### **Nine-square quilt, 1870–1930**

Mattie Cornett started this quilt as a young woman, but it was not completed for about 60 years. This hand- and machine-sewn textile includes fabrics from the 19th century, as well as from the 1910s and 1930s.



### **Grandmother's flower garden quilt, circa 1930**

Bracy or Winnie Cornett probably made this color-coordinated quilt of solids and prints using fabrics purchased for this purpose — a far cry from the use of old work clothes in earlier quilts. It might have been pieced by machine and then quilted by hand.

# The Cornett Family Farm and House Linn County, Missouri



*The William Cornett farmhouse in Linn County was the subject of extensive research by Toni M. Prawl. Dr. Prawl, Senior Historic Preservation Specialist for the Missouri Department of Transportation, published her analysis in 1986, her summary of which is given below. I am tracking down her full 237-page document, and will provide its major findings in a future issue of this newsletter. Concerning this historic photo, Dr. Prawl told me, "The image of the Cornett House is the way it appeared before the sisters (Bracy and Winnie) remodeled it. This is the way that William and Mattie would have known the house.... Today's view would be a different look altogether because the house has been relocated. The University sold it and I think the new owners moved it to an area farm."*

## **The W. L. Cornett farmhouse, Linn County, Missouri : Cultural Expression and Family History Through Architecture and Furniture, 1884-1986**

by Toni M. Prawl

The Cornett Farm is located in Linn County, Missouri. It is owned and operated by the College of Agriculture, University of Missouri-Columbia, as the Forage Systems Research Center, one of six out-state Agricultural Experiment Stations.

The University acquired the 1,200 acre farm in 1965 through a lease agreement between the Cornett sisters, Bracy and Winnie. Since then, the University has conducted research with beef cows and calves operating at business headquarters on the site. With the acreage, the University also acquired the farmhouse the Cornett family built.

Stipulations of the contract required the University own the property until 17 February 1989 and "preserve and maintain the furniture, furnishings and other contents of such residence as long as the University owns the Farm". It was the desire of Winifred Cornett that the home "be open to the public during hours set by the University of Missouri officials as an example of the type of dwelling and furnishings of a rural family during the later part of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century".

With her interests in mind, this study was conducted to evaluate the home through funding by the College of Agriculture in collaboration with the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center, Graduate School and of Office of Research. Documentation and analysis are intended to determine in what manner the Cornett-Moore house and furniture are a cultural expression of the family.

The characteristics of the furniture and architectural entities are investigated as a response of the Cornett family to geographical, economic, social and technical influences in a northern Missouri rural community during the late nineteenth century. The purpose of the study is to learn about the individuals, dates, and regional patterns and materials associated with the property. Objectives of the study focus on four main areas: (1) the local history of Linneus, Missouri, (2) the Cornett-Moore family genealogy, (3) the architecture of the Cornett home, and (4) the furnishings.

In regard to local history, findings indicate information about the community in which the Cornett-Moore family interacted. For example, early settlement patterns, merchandising sources, and travel routes help explain how and why the family's material history evolved to its current state.

Because a family dwelling is considered a carrier of culture, an understanding of family members often reveals the lifestyle maintained at the setting. Household needs and behavior of the family members is explored to determine how the influence of heritage, size, and roles, may have affected the home life of the Cornett family. As an example of vernacular architecture and historic construction methods, the Cornett home also allows interpretation of the spatial organization, the architectural style, and social usage of the site.

The final topic of the documentation is the classification of the collection of furniture in the home. Attention is devoted to determining the acquisition of furniture and the analysis of style, maker, date, and material.

*( 237 pages, with illustrations, maps, and plans )*