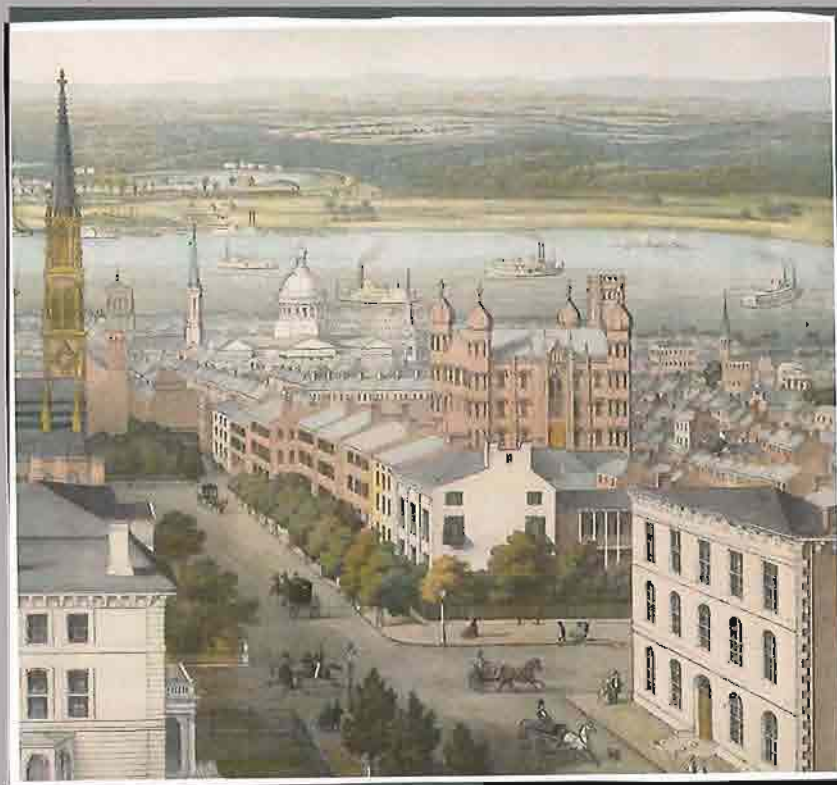


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The Many-Layered Cultural Lives of Things

Experiments in Multidisciplinary Object Study at a Local House Museum in St. Louis

Heidi Aronson Kolk

The St. Louis house of famed fur trader-turned-entrepreneur Robert Campbell and his wife Virginia was preserved as a museum, with many of its 1850s furnishings and architectural features and thousands of the family's possessions and papers intact. Preservationists' mythologies of the Robert Campbell House as a remnant of the once-glorious Lucas Place neighborhood and a symbol of the American dream informed 1940s museum practice and continue to shape contemporary perceptions of the house. The house's unusual history and ambiguous status in today's downtown landscape enriched a multidisciplinary model for teaching undergraduate students about objects' complex and at times contradictory lives.

A door has swung open into the past, revealing mid-nineteenth-century St. Louis in one of its most glamorous moods. That door is the one at 1508 Locust street, which opened yesterday for the first time in many years to unfold a picture of the elegance of life as it was lived in St. Louis almost a century ago. For it was here that the Robert Campbell family took up their abode, back in 1853, and today, rehabilitated and restored, the house stands almost exactly as it was in their time, a living memory of that bygone era. (Josephine Walter, 1943)¹

IN 1943, in a full-page illustrated spread with the headline “Where Door Swings Open into the Past,” the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* announced the long-awaited opening of the “Robert Campbell

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The author would like to thank Shirley Wadja and Debby Andrews for the invitation to begin this article and their affirmation at early stages of the work; Executive Director Andy Hahn and many other members of the Campbell House Museum staff for their remarkable attentiveness and support over the years; Dave Walsh, who provided technical advice on this project and continues to give thoughtful feedback on the digital dimensions of this project; Hannah Boettcher, who as always has shown great encouragement; Amanda Henry and the rest of the summer research team, who took on their Campbell House work with energy and generosity; and the thoughtful students in AMCS 475 (and several other courses since!), without whom this experiment in object mapping could never have happened.

¹ Clipping, Josephine Walter, “Where Door Swings Open into the Past,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 7, 1943.

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House” as a public museum.² Anticipation of the moment had been building for years—thanks mainly to extensive press coverage of the legal battles that followed the deaths of the surviving Campbell sons (the eldest, Hugh’s, in 1931, and the youngest, Hazlett’s, in 1938) and the public auctioning of their possessions when the estate was settled in 1941. These events turned the Campbell family’s assets into subjects of obsessive regional, national, and even international speculation. Throughout the period, saving their Greek revival row house (shown in fig. 1 as it looked around the time of the museum’s opening), the only one of its kind left in the downtown area, became something of a cause célèbre. Growing increasingly alarmed by the demise of other historic structures in the vicinity, a group of local preservationists formed

² *Ibid.* From the time of its founding, the official name given to the museum by its advisory board, the Campbell House Foundation, was the Campbell House Museum. But locals called it by a number of names during this period, including the Robert Campbell House.



Fig. 1. Campbell House, 1508 Locust Street, St. Louis, showing the north façade as it would have looked at the time of the 1943 museum opening, photo 1936. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

the William Clark Society (WCS) and campaigned to “Save the Campbell House” (fig. 2).

This so-called movement on foot to save the Campbell family home was not simply an effort to

salvage “the last remaining example of the picturesque post-Civil War period” (referring to the Gilded Age furnishings) but to create a historic house museum that would commemorate Robert Campbell’s



Fig. 2. Early Campbell House Foundation logo used as part of the "Save the Campbell House" campaign, ca. 1940. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

fur trade career, the city's role as an outpost for such trade, and the whole period of westward expansion, as well as the Campbells' ascendancy in antebellum St. Louis society.³ The WCS sought public and private sponsors for several months before the auction and promoted their cause extensively among local business and cultural leaders. Their campaign began during a period of war rationing, and most of their contributions came in increments of \$1 and \$5, but they managed to raise \$6,500 for purchase of objects in the auction. Some of these funds were submitted by schoolchildren, who donated their pennies and dimes; many others were given by prominent citizens, celebrities, and corporate donors.⁴ A short time after the auction, using an eleventh-hour

³ For more on early arguments to secure the house as a symbol of local and national pride, see clipping, "Seek to Preserve Old Campbell Mansion for Its Historic Interest," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 14, 1941; "Move to Preserve Campbell House Gaining Headway," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 14, 1941, 1. See also the records contained in the Campbell House Foundation Public Relations and Publications collection.

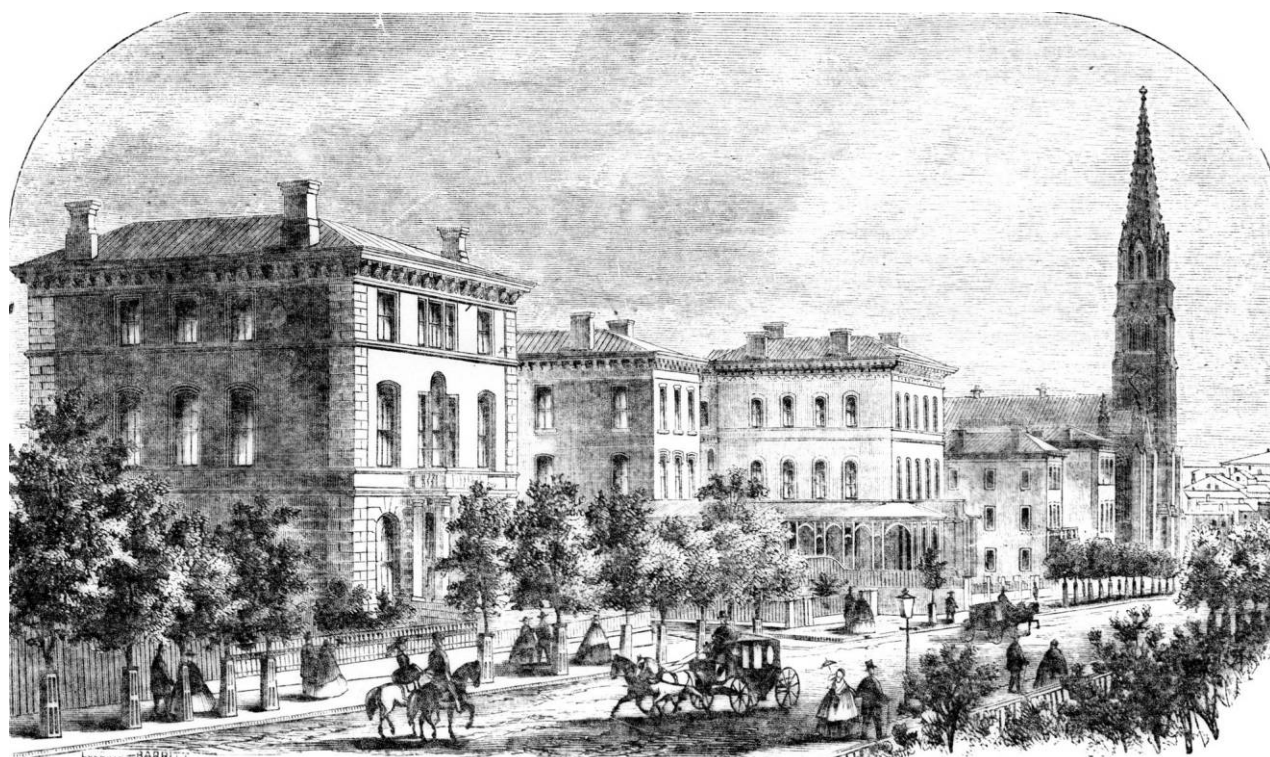
⁴ Despite the grassroots rhetoric, the William Clark Society was led by architects and other preservation-minded civic leaders with friends in high places, including members of the Advertising Club, the city's mayor, the chancellor of Washington University, and the director of the St. Louis Art Museum (then the City Art Museum). Their efforts ultimately reflected the priorities of the city's cultural elite, although they made efforts to argue for the broad relevance of the Campbell House Museum collection. See, e.g., clipping, "New Committee Formed to Save Campbell House," *St. Louis Star-Times*, February 19, 1941.

donation given by Stix, Bear and Fuller, a national department store headquartered in St. Louis, the WCS salvaged the property at 1508 Locust, which Hugh had left to Yale University as part of a bequest made in memory of his brother. (Fortunately, the university agreed to the relatively modest sum on the condition that the museum would be open to the public.) By the time this home was opened to the public, St. Louisans had been hearing it described for years, and many of them were eager to have a look inside.⁵

Perhaps this explains the sentimental tone the *Post-Dispatch* writer adopts as she announces that the "door into the past" is now standing wide open. Entering the house, she intones, visitors will find themselves "stepping back a century in time," encountering so many "original furnishings" and "such completely authentic restoration that the original character of the house has been preserved." Extending this time-travel metaphor at some length, she goes on to survey the home and its contents room by room, imagining what nineteenth-century visitors must have felt as they gazed at the hundreds of beautiful and expensive things the family owned. Objects set apart for special mention as embodiments of "St. Louis in one of its most glamorous moods" include a "bronze candelabra set on plush bases flanking the [parlor] entrance door," a "silver tray set with a Rockingham china tea service," a "groaning sideboard, so elaborately carved even to a deer's head at the top and fish on the doors," a "fantastic arrangement of stuffed birds under a huge bell glass," and "an amusing little table whose top boasts an angel done in needlepoint and glass beads," to name just a few (the accompanying photographs highlight other specimens of the collection).⁶

⁵ A veritable throng of local citizens attended the public auction of the family's possessions, which had been ordered by the heirs of the Campbell fortune. According to one newspaper account, "1,000 people [were] seated in the auction room [and] many were forced to stand" during the bidding, which was "spirited." The crowd included gawkers and treasure hunters, of course, but also the Campbells' friends and former employees, local dignitaries, and the preservationists who were trying to buy as much as they could of the collection using private funds and public donations. Clipping, "Campbell Home Furnishings Are Viewed by Public," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 23, 1941.

⁶ Walter, "Where Door Swings Open into the Past." Preservationists managed to get most of the showpieces—large pieces of furniture and family portraits, for example—as well as many mementos and some everyday objects that allowed museum founders to claim the house "stands almost exactly as it was in [the Campbells'] time." A couple of years after its opening, one local paper would rhapsodize: "This is no restoration or replica of an old building, filled with an assortment of semi-antique furnishings hurriedly thrown together for the purpose of illustrating the mode of life of an earlier day. It is the actual residence of a citizen of the City of St. Louis, constructed by him as a home for his family, filled with furniture and equipment which he purchased for his own use and which members of his family



VIEW ON LUCAS PLACE.

Fig. 3. Richard Edwards, "View on Lucas Place," 1860. From Richard Edwards, *Edwards's Great West and Her Commercial Metropolis* (St. Louis: Office of *Edwards's Monthly*, 1860), frontispiece. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

The distinctive capacity of the Campbell House and its objects to conjure up ideas of a better time would be celebrated often in the years to come—not only by the local press and city boosters but by museum officials, who anchored their arguments for the home's continued preservation in romanticizing accounts of its collection. While the Campbell House interiors look rather different now than they do in the article's many photographs (which show the house before it was restored to a different period), today's visitors are told similar things about the house's remarkable state of preservation, its influential owners, and its original furnishings, which are said to reveal what the house looked like when the Campbells lived there. Many of these visitors leave echoing the 1943 *Post-Dispatch* article, saying they have been transported into another time and place.

In 2006, this same Campbell House became the focal point of an advanced research seminar in the American Culture Studies (AMCS) program at Washington University (henceforth referred to by

its course number, AMCS 475). The course aimed to create an experience of cross-disciplinary cultural research by asking students to engage with the house and its contents as complex, multilayered cultural artifacts. A pedagogical model such as this one can not only enhance learning in a program like ours but serve as the basis for important exercises in liberal arts education more generally. In choosing the Campbell House for the course, I had in mind not only its potential as a site of historical research but its anomalous presence and curious status in the city's urban landscape. The very fact of its having been esteemed as a site of local heritage and an evocative object for so many decades—and the curious ways in which it resists reading even as it lures us to "step backward in time"—make it especially appropriate for cultural study.

Laboratory of Cultural Study

Built in 1853 and purchased a few years later by immigrant fur trader-turned-millionaire entrepreneur Robert Campbell and his young wife, Virginia, the house was once situated near the eastern edge of an opulent and exclusive community about a mile

made use of in the daily routine of living." "Perfect Example of Obsolete Dwelling." *St. Louis Daily Record*, January 1, 1945, 1. In subsequent decades, many additional objects were returned to the museum by individuals who purchased them at the auction.



Fig. 4. Edward Buehler, publisher, “View of St. Louis, from Lucas Place” showing the Robert Campbell House at right center, with one-horse carriage facing viewer in front, St. Louis, ca. 1865. E. Sachse and Co., Baltimore, lithographer. Engraving; H. 20”, W. 30”. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

west of the Mississippi River called Lucas Place (figs. 3 and 4). One historian has described Lucas Place as an “elite enclave”—the city’s “first clearly defined spatial expression of class consciousness.”⁷ The Campbells bought into the neighborhood early, claiming not only fashionable lifestyles but respite from a crowded and increasingly polluted city. And they stayed at 20 Lucas Place (which was later renamed Locust Avenue) long after their social peers moved out; three generations of the family would live in the house for some 70 years, decorating it in high Gilded Age style and then preserving the expensive 1850s furniture and hundreds of curios, heirloom objects, and a number of other midcentury fea-

⁷ Richard Allen Rosen, “Rethinking the Row House: The Development of Lucas Place, 1850–1865,” *Gateway Heritage* 12 (Summer 1992): 21. As Rosen and others have noted, Lucas Place was one of St. Louis’s earliest “exclusive” neighborhoods and serves as a prototype for a number of others in the Central West End and Tower Grove Park containing homes built on a much grander scale (which still stand).

tures long after they went out of style (see complete Campbell House chronology in app. A).

The house is literally the last vestige of Lucas Place. Located at 15th and Locust avenues, just around the corner from the recently refurbished Central Library (the imposing main branch of the St. Louis Public Library, built in 1901) and a few blocks south of Washington Avenue, a once-bustling commercial corridor that is now slowly being revitalized as a club and restaurant district, it has been a quiet witness to decades of development and decline. As figure 5 shows, the house stands between a YMCA parking lot at right, a mid-twentieth-century modern apartment complex directly to the south (seen behind and slightly to the right of the long double lot on which the house is situated), and a three-story concrete building at far left (on the former site of the turreted building in fig. 4). Just out of view are industrial buildings that replaced the elegant homes of Lucas Place, which have been redeveloped in recent decades for use as warehouses, residential lofts, and the aforementioned YMCA.



Fig. 5. Campbell House and environs, 2010. (Heidi Kolk.)

For tourists, commuters, and the local homeless population, the house's wrought-iron-enclosed rose garden and staid Georgian façade (fig. 6) have little visual relationship to its current urban context.

Certainly, the Campbell House's relationship to Lucas Place and to the city cannot be grasped through casual looking: its meanings are obscured by urban decay, nostalgia, and what Eric Sandweiss describes as the "long shadows of neglect" that confound our reading of the features of any urban landscape.⁸ Evidence of most of the neighborhood's defining features is virtually gone—in particular, its double-wide lots and tree-lined streets; green spaces; and even some landmark buildings are no longer perceivable.⁹ And the house has no remaining single-family homes as neighbors—in fact, has not had them for more than fifty years; its double lot and Victorian garden are surprising anomalies in an otherwise pavement-heavy district. But with a knowledgeable tour guide, one can begin to visualize the footprint of the neighborhood and see how planners sought to create intimacy, make the

most of a natural incline in the terrain, and, perhaps most important, keep out riffraff and manage development patterns with deed restrictions and distinctive offset, off-grid streets.

The banners that are suspended vertically from many of the streetlights along today's Locust Avenue between 13th and 16th Streets juxtapose historic photos of the Campbell family with stylized representations of modern-day residents, calling attention to some of these contradictions with the clever slogan "City Living since 1851." The banners and other promotional materials, such as the museum's website, that use this same phrase claim a spot for Lucas Place among other former glories of St. Louis's perpetually mourned heyday while at the same time gesturing toward more recent efforts to boost downtown development. In so doing, they also acknowledge the incongruity of the house as a local landmark, confirming and in a sense taking advantage of the fact that Lucas Place is not really legible in the visible traces.

Nevertheless, the institution now known as the Campbell House Museum (CHM) is especially well suited to serve as a laboratory of cultural study. Not only is the house exceptionally well preserved, but—because the owners left long paper trails—its place in the nineteenth-century landscape can be at least partially reconstructed. The CHM collection has impressive diversity and integrity, comprising much of the house's original contents—thousands of decorative, domestic, and architectural objects;

⁸ Eric Sandweiss, "Mind Reading the Urban Landscape: An Approach to the History of American Cities," in *Historical Archaeology and the Study of American Culture*, ed. Lu Ann De Cunzo and Bernard L. Herman (Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1996), 319.

⁹ Rosen describes these features in "Rethinking the Row House." See also an October 2011 post on the Campbell House blog: <http://campbellhousemuseum.wordpress.com/tag/mary-institute>.

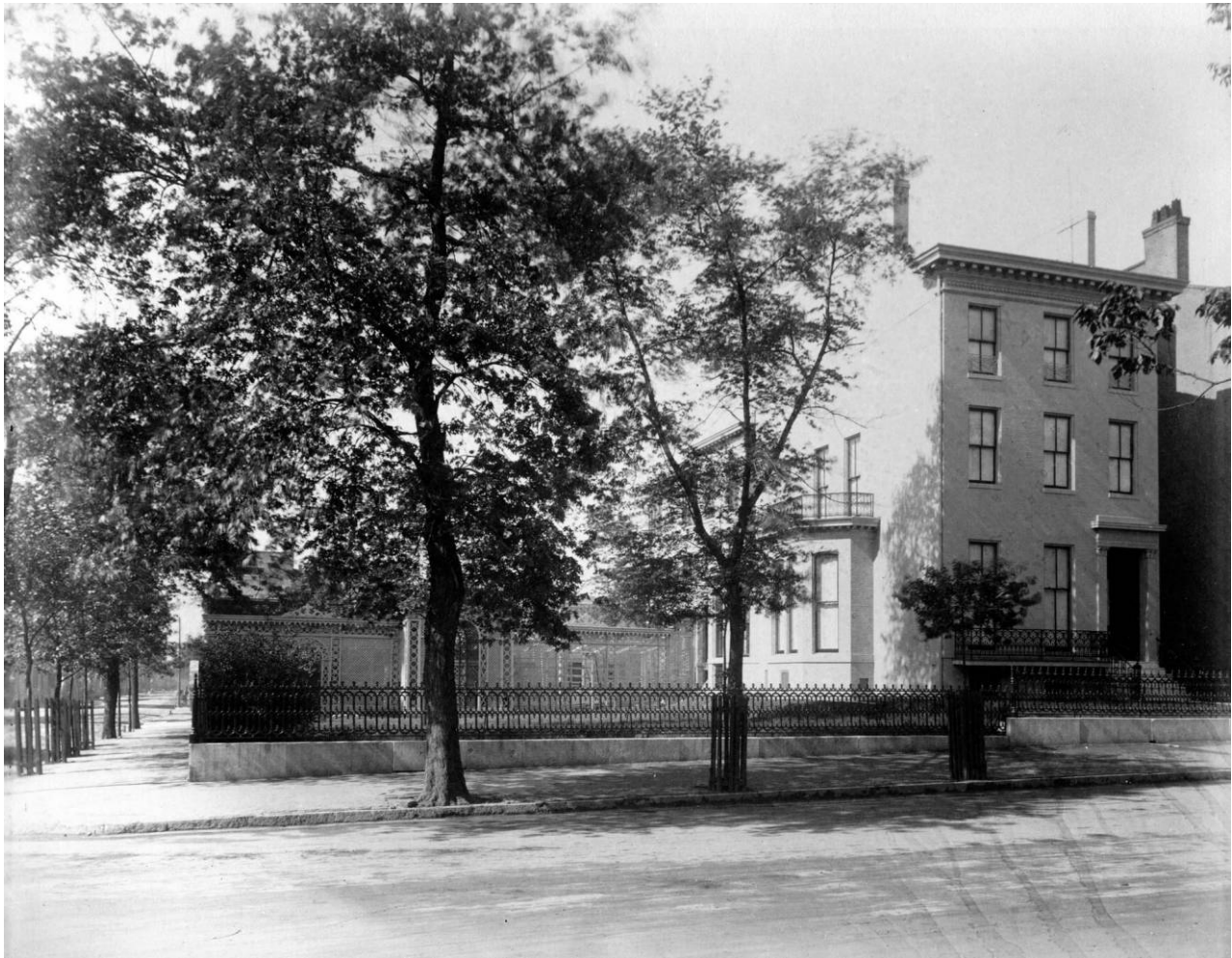


Fig. 6. Campbell House north façade and side yard with gardens, ca. 1885. Albumen print; H. 7.5", W. 9.5". (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

household papers; personal effects; and other objects as well as records that document structural and neighborhood changes over time. The showpiece of the collection is a set of circa 1885 leather-bound photo albums salvaged from a trash bin outside a local law firm in 1973, which contain dozens of richly detailed albumen prints that capture many of the home's interior spaces and some views of the old neighborhood as well. Museum staff have been refurbishing parts of the house for decades, but in 2000, an official shift to the circa 1885 period was made, and systematic restoration using the albumen prints began.¹⁰ Preservationists have also been able to make use of family letters, financial records, and other valuable documents from an

¹⁰ For a brief history of the house and its restoration, see <http://www.campbellhousemuseum.org/history/campbell-house>.

impressive body of primary materials—all of them easily accessible at local archives.¹¹

As a cultural landmark, the CHM is a curious study in contradictions. Although its interiors look much as they appeared at the end of the elder Campbells' lives, offering glimpses of life in a private community during the decades just before and after the Civil War, today's Locust Avenue bears little discernible evidence of the house's nineteenth- and twentieth-century contexts. The traces that do survive are difficult for a casual observer to interpret: features such as roads and sidewalks have been

¹¹ The most relevant archives include the Mercantile Library (University of Missouri, St. Louis), the Missouri State Archive (St. Louis Circuit Court Records), and the Missouri History Museum Library and Research Center; materials include family letters, probate court documents, and records from Robert Campbell's business ventures, including banking and real estate, dry goods, and riverboats.



Fig. 7. Campbell House and neighborhood to the west, facing southwest, ca. 1930. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

reoriented over time, and evidence that we might glean from looking at the site today (see fig. 5) in comparison to the 1880s photographs can be difficult to interpret without a fuller understanding of, for example, historic deed restrictions, recent changes in zoning laws, and evolving traffic patterns and row-house designs. During the 1890s, many elegant Lucas Place residences were converted into boarding-houses or small factories. Another fateful change—the reopening of Lucas Avenue to through traffic (and connecting it with Locust Street)—erased most of the remaining signs that it had once been a special residential district.¹²

The neighborhood experienced even more rapid urbanization in the first few decades of the twentieth century, when many of the few remaining

¹² The rise and fall of Lucas Place is described at <http://www.campbellhousemuseum.org/history/lucas-place>.

structures were razed and large-scale factories and the YWCA (1906) and YMCA (1927) were built. A circa 1930 photograph (fig. 7) that was reprinted with Hugh Campbell's 1931 *Post-Dispatch* obituary shows the house from the northeast, with the new YMCA in the background and the row house immediately adjacent to it still intact, its jutting storefront covered in billboards (it was razed in 1932).¹³ An earlier image (fig. 8), this one looking east from the house, shows that even in the 1920s, when some of the Lucas Place homes still remained, the area was already thoroughly commercialized.

¹³ 1512 Locust was altered significantly to serve commercial purposes between the late nineteenth century and 1931. From 1895 to 1907, Williamson Corset and Brace Co., an undergarments factory, rented the space, and between 1910 and 1932 it housed several motor and auto supply companies that made use of its garage and showroom spaces (which were remodeled in 1910). Campbell House Archives, St. Louis.



Fig. 8. Lucas Place neighborhood facing east from the Campbell House at the intersection of 15th and Locust, ca. 1920. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

Subsequent structural changes made to the property have significantly altered the look of the house itself: a two-story servants' quarters that once stood on the property's southernmost edge is no longer there, and other features of the existing house have been altered significantly to address integrity and accessibility issues. The radical restructuring of the house's urban context as St. Louis has changed also has not left the house untouched, although this deep structure is more difficult to identify than the architectural alterations. As Sandweiss contends, there are myriad difficulties in "study [ing] the cyclical process that forever enmeshes [an urban landscape] with the city's evolving social forms," and Lucas Place seems a case in point.¹⁴ We may be able to decipher these forms, but their meanings are elusive, and they continue to change. And since the neighborhood has been so fundamentally remade since the 1880s, it is

¹⁴ Sandweiss, "Mind Reading the American Landscape," 321–23.

not a matter of simply stepping through the CHM door, *Doctor Who*-style, to access another time and place.

The 1880s photographs offer hope for accurately reconstructing the inside spaces of the house, at least. They have been vital to restoration efforts in the last two decades as museum officials have aimed to bring the various spaces that the images depict—the front hall, the formal and informal parlors, the dining room, and several upstairs bedrooms, including the master bedroom suite and a space now defined as a library—closer to their circa 1885 state (figs. 9–11). These rooms now have more structural and decorative integrity: key architectural features have been restored, objects have been placed around the room in appropriate positions, and fabrics, decorative stenciling, wallpaper, and other elements have been arranged as they appear in the photos. In addition, many formerly lost items—items snatched away from the WCS by local dealers at the auction, sold by the WCS because they seemed insignificant, or lost somewhere inside



Fig. 9. Front hall viewed from the parlor, ca. 1885. Albumen print; H. 7.5", W. 9.5". (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

the house—have over the years been recovered and returned to their original locations. The photographs are frequently referenced during tours; visitors' impressions are shaped in large part by these photographs and the stories they seem to tell about life as it was in that "bygone era."

Gorgeously detailed and revealing as they may be, the photographs are problematic records of what the house looked like when the Campbells lived there. For one thing, we know very little about the occasion of their being taken. A plausible theory about their intended use as insurance documents (which would explain why they were kept for years by the Campbells' law firm) does not fully answer the question of whether they reflect the family's everyday world. If, as some have hypothesized, they were taken by Hugh, they may very well reveal a more intimate view of the family's domestic

spaces during that period.¹⁵ But the photos seem to have been at least partially staged; we cannot know what role the objects seen on the Campbells' tables and bureaus may have played in their everyday lives. More fundamentally, we can only know so much about how the house changed in the years between its purchase and the 1880s.

In short, the CHM as presented to the public can allure and mislead, a seeming "time capsule" or "representative glimpse" of old St. Louis that cannot fully live up to these terms. The house contains a sizable portion of what it once held, certainly, and is arranged in a fashion that may reflect

¹⁵ Hugh Campbell (1847–1931), the eldest surviving Campbell son, was an amateur photographer; a very similar set of photos depicting another family home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, also have survived and seem to have been taken by him.



Fig. 10. Dining room with formally set table, ca. 1885. Albumen print; H. 7.5", W. 9.5". (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

the family's tastes and habits (at least as they can be perceived in various forms of archival evidence), but much has happened since to alter these artifacts' meanings. Items acquired, sold, lost, or repurposed across a long period of time complicate easy assumptions about upper-class Victorian life and the objects that defined it, as well as the city's changing views of its past. As we can see when comparing the circa 1885 photograph of the Campbell House parlor with those from a 1943 *Post-Dispatch* article, a 1945 *Life* magazine spread, and a photo showing the south end of the room as it looks today (figs. 12–14; see also fig. 11), ideas about how to represent the house's past have differed over the years. Recent restoration has privileged heightened effects from color and an overall increase in the amount of surface detail: many, many more decorative objects placed around the room, more furniture differently placed, and a very different sense of how the room was used than in the early museum photographs.

Efforts by early CHM officials to "rehabilitate" this historic building—to make it "a picture of life as it was lived in St. Louis a century ago"—involved several major alterations of the site.¹⁶ They not only reconfigured furniture but also changed carpets, paint, and wallpaper to create what they thought to be a more accurate representation of Victorian life. It is unlikely that the new museum resembled what they found when they first visited after the death of Hazlett, the last remaining son. Not all objects were deemed worth saving given the museum's limited budget, and from archival and photographic evidence it is safe to assume that staff and early visitors changed certain fundamentals,

¹⁶ "The Color Camera at the Campbell House," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Sunday edition, February 28, 1943, 1. For more on the institution's changing museum narratives and preservation practices, see Mary Lynn Stevens, "From House to Museum: A Case Study of the Campbell House Museum, St. Louis, Missouri" (MA thesis, University of Delaware, 1982).



Fig. 11. Parlor south end showing morning room beyond at right center and bay window at left center, ca. 1885. Albumen print; H. 7.5", W. 9.5". (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

including placement of artwork and the number of personal objects on display.¹⁷

We know much less about the house's evolution between 1885 and 1938, as records of purchases

¹⁷ A good number of these items were sold in lots at the auction, and no effort was made to salvage them. Others were likely sold on the side to private collectors, and some may have been carried off by Campbell House Foundation members (CHM Executive Director Andy Hahn, in discussion with the author, December 18, 2012). The house was strewn with the family's belongings—many of which are now lost—when it was opened for the very first time to local officials who came to survey its contents after Hazlett's death. A week after the opening, the *Post-Dispatch* ran a color photo spread showing a very tidy house indeed. The accompanying article is concerned not with family possessions but showpiece objects that create a "picture of life as it was lived in St. Louis a century ago." A "hand-carved bog oak" dining room set and "medallioned wallpaper" "contribute to the pre-Civil War atmosphere." "The Color Camera at the Campbell House," 1.

and changes in décor from this period are very thin. The Campbell sons had something of an idiosyncratic relationship to their parents' possessions—especially after the turn of the century, when they settled into reclusive bachelorhood and watched the neighborhood around them industrialize, occasionally renovating parts of the house according to their own priorities, and, according to local gossip, never throwing much away and holding tight to a range of memory objects such as portraits and collectibles that the brothers moved about the house. Today, museum officials point to evidence that suggests that Hugh may have kept his parents' possessions to create a sense of comfort and order for Hazlett as his mental state deteriorated. The latter was confined to the house and eventually to his bedroom suite, and a few CHM documents suggest that certain objects such as family portraits



Fig. 12. Parlor south end, 1943. Clipping from “The Color Camera at the Campbell House,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 28, 1943. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

may have been brought from elsewhere in the house to his rooms. And it is suspected that the brothers altered their use of other rooms considerably during their reclusive years. When the *Post-Dispatch* or early museum officials boasted that “the house stands almost exactly as it was in [the Robert Campbell family’s] time,” surely they did not refer to the reclusive late period, when Hugh

and Hazlett were cloistered inside a home filled with antiques!

In the last decade and a half, the house has been significantly changed by restoration activity seeking to portray the site primarily in its 1880s state even as the 1997 policy accommodates “a continuum” of different moments in the life of the family home and “multiple aesthetic and stylistic movements



Fig. 13. Parlor north end, 1945. From "How America Lived: Six Old Houses Give Realistic Record of the Past," *Life*, May 7, 1945, 54. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

popular during its occupancy."¹⁸ While most visitors probably assume that the story of the 1880s photographs has been accurately told and that

¹⁸ A history of the most recent restoration and an excerpt of the 1997 restoration policy can be found at <http://www.campbellhousemuseum.org/about/the-restoration>.

the collection that they have seen is mostly intact by those standards, there is much we cannot know about the house as both an object and a container of objects. To what extent—and in what ways—should we engage with this specimen of "city living" in today's St. Louis? Whose lifestyles does it reflect, exactly? Should it instead be interpreted



Fig. 14. Parlor south end, 2010. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

as a specimen of broader St. Louis culture during the 1880s? (Or perhaps earlier, since it contains many items that Robert and Virginia purchased in the 1850s and that were used for decades after?) What do the many objects that survive have to do with the real lives of its various inhabitants? How can we devise a strategy of reading the house that accommodates a range of meanings and approaches and that honors both the visible traces and the lost evidence?

Such interpretive challenges need not be deterrents; they are in fact perfect occasions to consider the complexity of cultural objects and to seek new ways of working with them. The house and its contents may be shrouded in mystery, but they nevertheless invite fascinating, important questions on subjects as varied as public memory, the authority of museum narratives, changing ideas about preservation and redevelopment, the complexities of ownership, and so on. They also allow for exploration of a wide range of historical subjects, such

as the role of domestic servants in antebellum life, Victorian mourning rituals, the early fur trade, slavery in a border state, changing family structures after the war, Irish immigration, and mid-nineteenth-century courtship. It is thus accurate to say that when the CHM was opened to the public, a door to mid-nineteenth-century St. Louis opened as well—though not the “completely authentic” Campbell world that the *Post-Dispatch* meant to conjure. Its multiple meanings and rich contradictions are some of the primary reasons I chose to have students explore it.

Program Priorities and Pedagogical Aims

At the time that I agreed to teach the course, I had just returned from a research fellowship at Winterthur Museum and Library, where work with material culture not only raised my own disciplinary consciousness but challenged my assumptions

about how to do the work of a literary scholar. I had recently widened the scope of my research, which focused on nineteenth-century American grand tour narratives, to include a wide range of travel-related collectibles—including scrapbooks and diaries, art objects, home décor such as wallpaper and fabrics as well as souvenirs, and ephemera. In the process of doing this work, I had come to think about literary works as circulating cultural objects with distinctly material lives and to engage with these texts as extensions of their owners' movements and shifting cultural identities. The Campbell House had been a site of interest for me in the past, but at that moment I saw in it new possibility, new ways of engaging with museum objects as cultural texts, and, in particular, new sources of insight about the circulation of objects through time, space, and narratives of cultural memory.

With all of this in mind and a taste for pedagogical adventure, I decided to structure AMCS 475 as a series of case studies in material culture, with the Campbell House as the central, most substantial of those cases. In describing the motivations behind the course, its core pedagogical assumptions and features, and some of its built-in challenges, I explain how the CHM has come to serve as a compelling site of cultural study for both graduate and undergraduate students in AMCS, yielding insights that have turned out to be important ones for the program as well as for me. Its curriculum has become a model for courses and fieldwork opportunities that are now central features of the undergraduate major, and my students' work inspired an object-mapping project and other research in the years since. In describing how the central approach taken in AMCS 475 has spawned new ideas, I also aim to show that work with objects such as those in the CHM can serve to highlight—and to some degree mitigate—problems inherent in cultural study as well as the liberal arts more broadly speaking.

The mission of the American Culture Studies program at Washington University is to facilitate the study of culture, bringing together scholars from different fields who have mutual interests in American subjects so that they can share their work and collaborate on projects large and small.¹⁹ More “multi-” than conventionally “inter-” disciplinary, AMCS seeks to identify and better understand areas and methods of cultural study; its undergraduate curriculum allows for a broad survey of methodologies and topics as well as for a layering of complemen-

tary approaches and ideas. Despite its hopelessly generic title (“American Culture Studies: Theory, Methods and Visions”), AMCS 475 served a vital function in the AMCS program at the time. Intended as both a capstone and a kind of consciousness-raising exercise, the course asked students to consider the many ways that American culture is studied in different fields and to explore strategies of multidisciplinary inquiry that they might apply in a wide range of academic contexts. More practically, it was intended to lay the groundwork for a major research project at the end.²⁰

AMCS has always privileged hands-on, exploratory work. Some of its especially successful courses have helped students to see cultural objects (texts, physical artifacts, institutions, events, and others) as “living” entities that must be studied using a range of strategies and have instilled a sense of culture as a complex web of relationships between such objects. The program has offered a number of team-taught courses that make these concepts very evident—in which faculty self-consciously engage with questions of methodology, highlighting points of intersection and divergence in their approaches to a given subject and their ways of knowing more generally. Several years before I taught AMCS 475, for example, a historian, a biologist, and a literary scholar taught a multifaceted two-year program on the Lewis and Clark expedition: students read a trove of primary documents in a deeply multidisciplinary way, listened to guest lecturers from different fields describe types of evidence they consider and questions they ask, and explored the expedition route in canoes on the Missouri River. This activity served as a seedbed for the next year's team-based research projects and has since served as a model for other courses, including our annual summer On Location seminar.²¹

In spite of our efforts to provide rich learning opportunities, we found that students were often less able to apply mixed methods and interpretive processes than was desirable. Our majors during this period usually had serious interest in cultural

²⁰ Faculty from a number of disciplines have been asked to teach this course over the years. Some have chosen themes, while others have taken a more utilitarian approach, allowing students to dictate what specific subjects would be considered. The course I designed did not really resemble the precedents, and in many ways it was a greater departure than it at first seemed.

²¹ For an overview of the Lewis and Clark program and its educational impact, see a feature article written several years later: <http://magazinearchives.wustl.edu/Summ04/DiscoveringLewis&Clark.htm>. The On Location program website can be found at <http://pages.wustl.edu/onlocation>.

¹⁹ For more on the AMCS program, see <http://amcs.wustl.edu>.

topics but sometimes not much imagination for the work of conceptualizing culture or its multidisciplinary study. Having come of age in an increasingly specialized academic universe, they had not had much opportunity for discussions of the intellectual goals, methodologies, and conceptual limitations of their cultural research. These were usually taken for granted in their courses, and the further along they went in their major programs, the less flexible was their thinking. Even though AMCS 475 came near the end of their undergraduate careers, when they presumably had developed intellectual affinities, disciplinary allegiances, and skills (in a course whose students come from fields across the humanities and social sciences, the contrasts were often striking), their analytical work could be shallow and tendentious.²² We found that they shied away from complex problems and assumed that their job was to figure out the “right” answers.

Given this background/context, I designed a version of AMCS 475 that would allow students to use specific forms of disciplinary knowledge even as it presented them with a multifaceted cultural object that, as I have begun to suggest, challenges conventional thinking. The CHM has proven especially effective in its ability to problematize some of the routines of academic inquiry, and it has also allowed us to fulfill one of the program’s long-time priorities: encouraging research on regionally significant sites and subject areas and using local resources in a hands-on way. For our students, a sizable number of whom are not from Missouri and may know little about the culture and history of the Midwest, this encourages fresh thinking. Both the local dimensions of the site and the up-close work with material artifacts motivated them to move beyond what they thought they knew and to consider in a new way the various modes of analysis available to them as students of culture.

The AMCS 475 Model

AMCS 475 students were invited to engage directly with the CHM’s complex history and status as a cultural site, its tantalizingly “intact” collection of artifacts, and its seemingly alien presence in the neighborhood. By openly interrogating its many

layers of meaning, including unknowable or distorted pieces of its history, various representations of its defining objects and narratives, and the political, social, and even environmental implications of these representations, they would, I hoped, develop a more-nuanced understanding of house museums as “cultural objects.” They were asked to work with a single object from the CHM collection throughout much of the term, uncovering a wide range of facts and relationships that comprise its “cultural life” (or rather, “lives”). At the same time, they also moved about—inside the CHM itself, through various archives, and in and around the city—seeking to better understand that object’s contradictory roles and meanings, including its current significance and, by extension, the CHM’s place in a changing urban landscape (see the course description and a list of course objectives in app. B).

The course’s curricular sequence calls conspicuous attention to the many relationships that can be traced and understood in a study of the house, ensuring an incremental approach to cultural objects. At the same time, it slows down and complicates different phases of basic object analysis, allowing students to linger over (and sometimes problematize) the “facts” on which so much cultural interpretation is based. This sequence may best be understood as a series of conceptual forays in the general direction of a single CHM artifact, each one building on the previous and introducing some disciplinary approach suited to a given “level” of cultural investigation. Moving from broad to specific concepts back to broad again, the course disrupts students’ expectations about how one should study material culture while emphasizing methodological matters with which they will need to be concerned, starting with the most basic, such as how to conceptualize their work, from goals to methods to outcomes.

The structure of the AMCS 475 model can be visually represented as a set of layers through which the student moves from outer (broad discussions of American culture and history, St. Louis and neighborhood contexts) to inner (object analysis, consideration of objects in rooms and in the household) and back out again, always remembering that the layers overlap, and are all elements of a complex cultural universe in which a given object is said to be located. In this universe, objects can be read as part of sets or “constellations,” as elements of room decor but also of (at times changing) domains in the house, as family’s belongings and also of the city’s heritage, parts of a past neighborhood and a

²² Until recently, AMCS has been a second major only, meaning that students must pair it with another major in a discipline such as political science or history or one in the art, architecture, or business schools. As I will suggest below, the structure of the new stand-alone major was partly informed by the experiences of AMCS 475.

current one, and so forth.²³ Such a multilayered framework is analogous to Sandweiss's model of spatial landscape study, which maps an urban space's "dynamic networks of forms and functions."²⁴ But its final goal is less to identify a coherent system of connections than to describe a wide range of relationships and changes that have affected a given object's meanings through time. Indeed, the course structure expresses the paradoxical priority of seeking both deeper and broader understandings of an object's cultural meanings.

As I was careful to emphasize with students, while the conceptual work in the first half of the semester moved from general to specific, our classroom activities throughout the term reversed this movement, contextualizing an object on several levels at once and deconstructing various interpretive assumptions (as well as the standard format for an advanced seminar). Along the way, we considered objects from "theoretical," "expert," and "local" viewpoints—some directly related to the nineteenth-century homes and local history, some not. We also read several canonical and subject-specific studies from the field of material culture (see the bibliography in app. C), but we treated them as methodological exempla rather than as either starting points for our work or final explanations of what we uncovered. Our discussions were punctuated by work in the field that often challenged experts' claims or seemed to argue for a totally different approach. We also thought about how many different kinds of knowledge pertain to cultural objects and how each kind has its own implied notions of value and meaning. We were concerned not only with object relations within the sphere of nineteenth-century St. Louis and changes in cultural perception and valuation of objects, but with how layers of meaning accrue and complicate efforts to understand a single nineteenth-century object in a given context.

Many CHM items serve as intriguing illustrations of this phenomenon. A gilded porcelain toilet service that is now located on a marble-topped

washstand in the master bedroom suite, for example, seems to be a set of items with fairly straightforward and recoverable hygiene and/or decorative functions. Presumably, the service is positioned there because that is where it is shown in 1880s photos (fig. 15). But as part of the décor of a bedroom with evolving uses, the set has had many other purposes, meanings, and relationships to family history. It was deemed worth saving by the Campbell sons after their parents died (but likely was not used for washing in later years given the presence of indoor plumbing) and was sold at the estate auction to early museum officials. The set can easily be linked to the family's drinking and washing habits and also to a number of other hygiene objects that survive, some of them visible in the 1880s photos. The Campbell children suffered a number of birth defects and other ailments (including of course Hazlett's mental illness), and one explanation is that the family's sustained contact with local river water, which they obtained through early lead pipes found in only the wealthiest families' homes, was to blame. The extant evidence is inconclusive, and, in any case, the service seems not to have seen much use beyond the 1880s or '90s. Many such items seem in later years to have taken on mostly sentimental or decorative purposes, and it is even possible that this set was pulled from storage for the purposes of the 1880s estate photography.

Still, any thorough study of the set's cultural meanings would need to wrestle with a range of possible uses and associations, and these facts are not irrelevant. Such a study could also give consideration to a host of literal and figurative uses, only some of which are alluded to in the CHM archive, and to many non-Campbell "users" (people who have invested some kind of meaning in an object, in this case, potters, shippers, servants, visitors, auction house officials and lawyers, early museum curators, museumgoers, and others). If a student sought energetically to map these relationships while at the same time attending to the physical features of even one of the items in the set, not to touch on the evidence in photographs, the web of traceable connections would soon become staggering.

Even so, I asked my class to do just that: to imagine and then (at least partially) document the whole constellation of relationships in a given object's life. Students started by conceptualizing a relatively small (but actually quite complex) set of relationships in the part of the house where their object is now situated before moving across the house as a whole and within the CHM collection more generally to identify objects related by use,

²³ Of particular relevance here is the idea of what Kenneth Ames calls "horizontal constellations or clusters of objects in interlocking sequences. ... Horizontal constellations serve as indices of attitudes, values, and patterns of behavior of relatively limited duration" ("Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas Schelereth [Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982], 208). See also Katherine Grier, "The Decline of the Memory Palace," in *American Home Life, 1880-1930*, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schelereth (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 59.

²⁴ Sandweiss, "Mind Reading the Urban Landscape," 321.



Fig. 15. North-facing master bedroom with porcelain toilet service on a marble-top washstand, ca. 1885. Albumen print; H. 7.5", W. 9.5". (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

association, material, historical context, family history, and so on. Many times all they could do was to try to name potential connections. At one point, the class referred to sample object-relations maps I had produced to try to think more about our own lines of inquiry (see, e.g., the map of Virginia Campbell's portrait: fig. 16). These very basic prototypes were not intended to be comprehensive but to suggest the range of artifacts within the CHM collection that could be connected to the object in question. I had to discourage students from fetishizing the maps as expressions of an ideal method and to urge them to move beyond explicit connections such as those between a piece of furniture and its receipt of purchase.

Eventually, students developed other ways of rendering the web of relationships they had uncovered, and I began to see that these relationships might be elegantly but suggestively expressed in

terms of multiple, interconnected agents and uses (both literal and figurative uses). As object mapping became a more pronounced goal during the collaborative summer research project that followed the course (see below), the team began to experiment with a Who/What/Where/When/How schematic that we hoped would allow us to translate students' findings into metadata for an AMCS digital project, *American Lives*, as well as maps that allowed them to visualize relationships. A student who worked on a pitcher from the porcelain toilet service created an ambitious poster-sized map that captures that object's various relationships with details of the Campbell family history (specifically their travels abroad and changing uses of the service), as well as with other items in the CHM collection and the relevant history of the Doulton company (app. D). Even though she could have taken things much further, her map reveals many

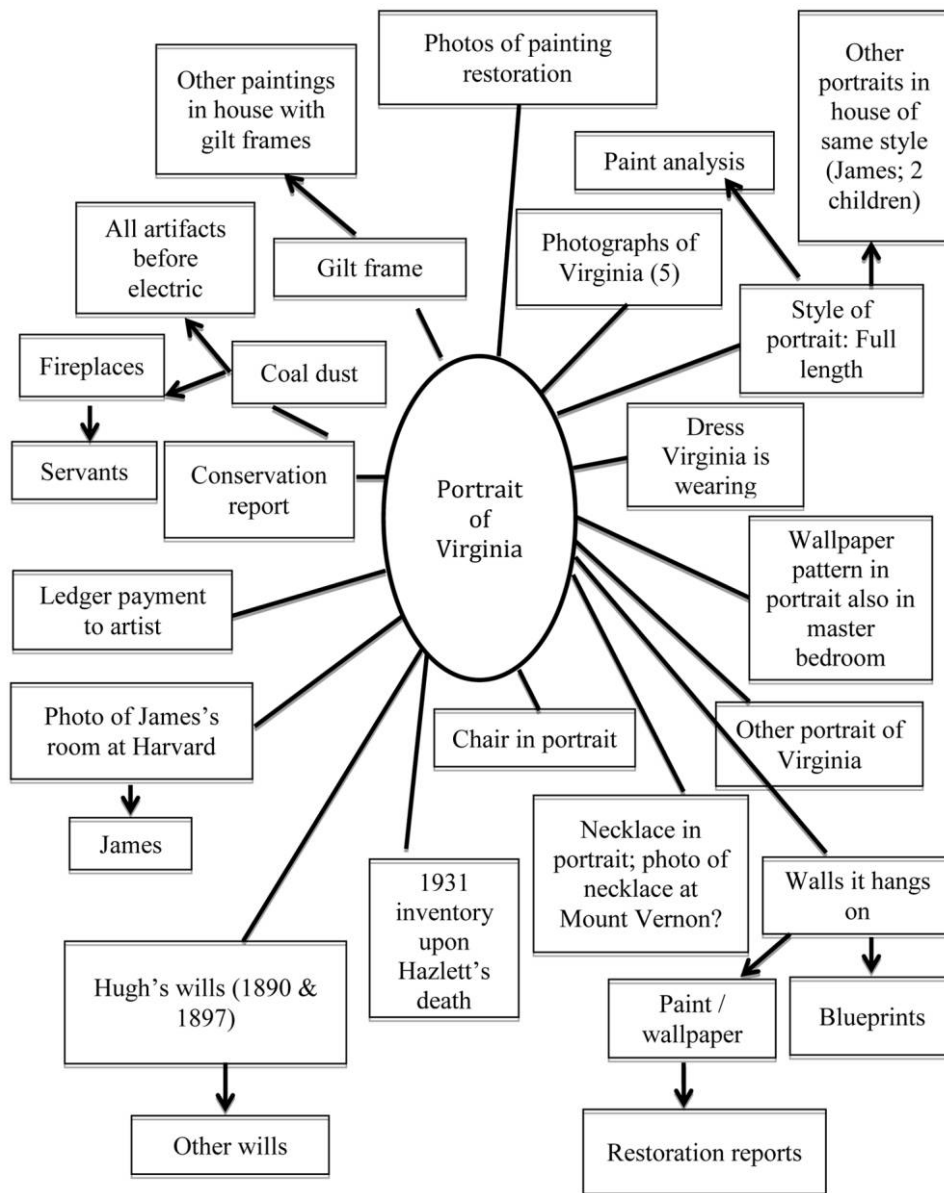


Fig. 16. Object relations map prototype for the portrait of Virginia Campbell, 2006. (Heidi Kolk, redrawn from original in AMCS Collection.)

points of intersection between objects, contextual facts, and uses and also suggests the complexities of reading an object that is part of a set.

In AMCS 475, my particular aim was to have students multiply the number of documentable relationships so as to illuminate the myriad dimensions of an object's life that would have previously gone unstudied. As the course progressed, students moved beyond "inner" or household-, neighborhood-, and city-specific layers of context and also beyond literal uses to "outer" spaces, various geographic and physical locations, networks of producers and

users, rituals, forms of display, figurative meanings, preservation practices, museum narratives, and so on. Often, their associative leaps led to important realizations about the interpretive possibilities of single object, as for example when a psychology major in the class linked the label from a bottle that once contained "medicinal" cocaine to early twentieth-century psychiatric treatments, and from these to a local asylum, both relevant to Hazlett. In such cases, I asked them to think not only about interpretations that can be definitively proven using objects as evidence, but the *kinds of thinking*—the overall

exploratory opportunities and intellectual insights—that are possible when object associations and linkages are pursued a few steps beyond their normal limits.

I encouraged students to consider the CHM's own evolving contexts as well. They knew enough of the institution's history to see that some of its layers—the watershed moments represented by the 1880s photos, the 1937 auction, and the 2000s restoration were three that we came back to repeatedly—were especially relevant to their research. Some considered how their objects had been treated in recent exhibits, docent-led tours, promotional booklets, or special events (I assigned a smattering of related primary sources to whet their appetites), while others thought more about how the broader culture has related to and understood their objects, giving them new meanings in public history projects, heritage tours, neighborhood redevelopment plans, and even the *Antiques Roadshow*. This research not only multiplied potential meanings, linking past and present narratives about the house and its contents, but occasioned stimulating conversation about how cultural agents such as historians, city politicians, activists, museum patrons, docents, and the consuming public give shape to these narratives.

At times, the dizzying number of potential linkages left students feeling uncertain about the viability of their projects. To some extent, our phased approach to object analysis forestalled total panic and discouraged snap judgments, but there was plenty of anxiety about the proliferation of meanings and associations. Students asked me again and again to confirm they were “on the right track.” In response, I emphasized the need for attention to details and openness to multiple explanations and reminded them of Richard Grassby's observation that “The study of objects does not reveal archetypes; on the contrary, it suggests how easily a culture fragments.”²⁵

Much of the work of the course was both exploratory and iterative. I asked students to repeat core exercises (such as drawing their object, diagram-

ming a room, or assessing photographic evidence) throughout the term and to document as many of its various material and associative realities as they could uncover through different forms of research, along with their own musings about them. I had students write poems in which their objects were the speakers to help them to try to imagine how such objects might think or act. And they did some work with non-CHM artifacts as well (e.g., analyses of public sculptures on campus, exploration of material objects from Washington University Library's Special Collections, and ethnographic studies of family possessions), seeking new perspectives on material culture and creative strategies for reading artifacts.

Their final assignment, the “Cultural Biography,” gave them several priorities: first, to document the many facts and contexts out of which their object's meanings have been constructed (it was up to them to decide how to represent those meanings); second, to present and discuss possible interpretations; and third, to account for their methods, insights, and interpretive difficulties. Other (mostly unstated) goals of the assignment included critical assessment of the various (academic, cultural, personal) narratives about cherished things that emerged during the semester and evaluation of their own values and assumptions about objects. I hoped this would help them to become more intentional and self-aware in future cultural research.

Challenges and Sources of Insight

In seeking to understand their objects' specific lives, students found themselves exploring archives and consulting a range of resources they otherwise never would have encountered. This kept them humble, reminding them that objects are not “simple” or “obvious” forms of cultural evidence and that any responsible study will go well beyond what is visible in a first or second visit. Not surprisingly, they resisted some of this work—not just because it was tiring but also because it unsettled cherished ideas about “original” research. And they got restless during field trips, which included visits to both CHM-related sites (nearby neighborhoods, the Campbell plot in Bellefontaine Cemetery) and others (the St. Louis Art Museum, the Washington University campus, other nineteenth-century neighborhoods, and so on).

The resistance was in itself revealing, and we talked about what they were experiencing when

²⁵ Richard Grassby, “Material Culture and Cultural History,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 4 (April 2005): 600. The article begins with a complaint that “Many cultural historians ignore the physical environment in which culture is embedded” and goes on to argue for the value of treating “artifacts as evidence” (591). While the points he makes are not wholly new ones in the field of material culture, the way in which he frames his case for fellow historians—and his consideration of the challenges of trying to understand the “nebulous concept of culture”—made it especially suited to AMCS 475 class discussion.

we returned to the classroom. Sometimes these conversations ended with a realization about a limiting assumption they had made or a shortcut that they had relied upon before that no longer seemed appropriate. And sometimes they raised even thornier issues, such as what to do when an object is not what it seems in the most fundamental sense.

For example, one student discovered that her object was one of only a few donated “period pieces” in the collection that have no connection to the Campbell family. We wondered: Does this lack of Campbell provenance cause the object to no longer merit consideration in the context of the CHM collection? How should it be understood in relationship to the so-called habilitated and restored museum of the 1940s and to that of today? We veered off in these directions fairly often, and I suggested that this was part of the purpose of our work: to negotiate with ambiguities. Class exercises that seemed to be about practical issues (how best to visually represent one room in the CHM, map objects by location in the house, or categorize the features of a particularly complex object, whether to write an extended description of their objects or simply provide photos, and so forth) became occasions to wrestle with some of the fundamental questions of object study.

As must by now be clear, the CHM did not place many restrictions on my students’ work in the house; they could move in and out of both the “front” and “back” spaces of the house and with assistance could handle and even dismantle objects, sit on furniture, explore storerooms and the attic, and even trace plumbing and electrical lines. The museum’s staff is small (in addition to paid executive and assistant directors, they have only devoted volunteers, docents, and interns), but with advance planning and careful coordination, we were able to arrange for the access and support that my students needed. Not only were the staff accommodating when we took over the museum for hours at a time, but they helped me to devise exercises that drew on the strengths of the collection. Without biasing toward preferred outcomes, we tailored assignments to the materials and opportunities at hand and sought to guide the class through the many phases of exploration.

It was at times difficult to help students identify resources and experts without leading them to particular discoveries and modes of thinking we believed worthwhile. Naturally, they wanted to get the “inside story” from the CHM staff—the keepers of what Katherine Grier calls “houselore”—who

have ample knowledge about the collection and the family that my students found invaluable.²⁶ The staff would steer them back to object files and archives or to the object itself. They were neither fretful about controlling the objects nor defensive about the narratives told about them, and they modeled openness, patience, and receptivity to multiple meanings and attentiveness to detail. My students had many more creative ideas as a result of working with them than would have been possible otherwise.

By far the toughest challenge pedagogically speaking was inducing students to follow through on the multiphase interpretive work that their final projects required. They were at first timid, and then impatient; when they got past the initial worry that they didn’t know enough about nineteenth-century porcelain to do the toilet set justice, they rushed to generalize based on scant observation. Sometimes they would struggle to develop questions at the outset of the process, toiling to conceive of ways to engage with the “obvious” or “unremarkable” facts that they had uncovered. Imaginative students would get bogged down in the seemingly endless questions that they could pose. Others would resort to clichés, pat explanations, or even archetypes after just a few minutes of looking. Perhaps the most flagrant example occurred during the collaborative summer research project, when, upon viewing an elaborately plumed bird mounted under a glass dome (fig. 17), one of the students on the research team declared it a symbol of the Campbell family’s “colonialist attitudes.”

The AMCS 475 students fell prey to this impulse as well, and while it was sometimes possible to nudge them into a realization that they were projecting their own views onto an object that could have had a number of functions and meanings, a few of them clung to pet theories. When asked to support a given hypothesis, these students would offer up a few facts that did not always support that hypothesis, which of course short-circuited the analytical processes that would have allowed for an understanding of the complexities of the CHM and any object in it. Rather than probing for what E. McClung Fleming terms “the body of distinctive facts about an artifact” and asking what these facts can be said to reveal about, for example, where, how, and for what a stuffed bird might have been used, they would reach immediately for broad, often vague concepts (leisure, status, wealth, among

²⁶ Grier, “The Decline of the Memory Palace,” 49.



Fig. 17. Stuffed bird of paradise and others under glass dome, 1997. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

others) that could apply to virtually any object in the collection.²⁷

To be fair, this is an impulse they share with many more-seasoned scholars, as Helen Sheumaker and Shirley Theresa Wadja have noted in their introduction to *Material Culture in America*. They suggest that, by bringing focus back to “the physical, tactile ‘thing-ness’” of objects, today’s material culture studies can serve as a “vital corrective” for distorting generalizations that occur in much theory-driven

²⁷ E. McClung Fleming, “Artifact Study: A Proposed Model,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 9, no. 1 (January 1974): 161–62.

practice.²⁸ In my experience, these generalizations often coincide with a desire to identify prematurely certain types of significance and to construct ambitious interpretations that reflect prevailing ideas in their home fields—what they’re “supposed” to be saying about objects in a Victorian row house, for example. Any model of object analysis that seeks to prevent these generalizations needs not only to focus attentively on “thing-ness” but to encourage responsiveness to the subtleties of object relations that make a generic claim about the family’s “colonialist attitudes” seem not just heavy-handed but seriously limiting.

Sheumaker and Wadja contend that such analysis should come in service of a study not only of an object’s history and properties but of how it “embod[ies] power and thus serve[s] to define relationships.”²⁹ As I sought to forestall various interpretive distortions that other scholars have warned against, such as treating artifacts as mere “illustrations” or reading their aesthetic features without interrogating the limiting assumptions of art history, I repeatedly emphasized the idea of agency—that objects are active participants in a culture, shaping experiences and relationships and in turn being shaped by agents with power over objects and one another.³⁰ Students can engage with these facets of an object’s cultural lives by exploring specific associations, uses, and meanings over time and asking critical questions about power as it was experienced in relationship to the various layers of the Campbells’ world.

To build on the previous example: starting with an identification of various facts about a stuffed bird and its relationships (e.g., what it is, how it got to St. Louis, who bought it, where and how it was prepared and displayed, what it has to do with the many stuffed birds—or other animal-themed objects—owned by the Campbells, what other bird-related rituals were common in the household and the city, and so on) not only grounds broader claims in the physical details of the object’s life but leads students to hypothesize differently from the start, attending to multiple concrete, localized meanings. This is not to say that their reading won’t

²⁸ Helen Sheumaker and Shirley Teresa Wajda, “Introduction,” in *Material Culture in America: Understanding Everyday Life* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), xv–xvii.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, xvi.

³⁰ See, e.g., Grassby, “Material Culture and Cultural History”; Jules Prown, “On the ‘Art’ in Artifacts,” in *Living in a Material World: Canadian and American Approaches to Material Culture*, ed. Gerald L. Pocius (St. John’s: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1991), 144–55, and “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 1–19.

come back around to broader interpretations but that they are more likely to recognize the object itself as a “symbolically saturated entity,” as Abby Clouse has elegantly phrased it, whose specific symbolic functions are most clearly understood in relationship to concrete elements of its various lives.³¹

A number of influential scholars have advocated on behalf of models that begin with “thing-ness,” and I found it useful to have students look at some of this work from the early years of material culture study. E. McClung Fleming’s artifact study served as an example of what I termed “ground-up” approaches (my students read it in the second week of class), while Jules Prown’s “Style as Evidence” helped them to see how objects could be read as expressions of cultural ideas.³² But these models privilege the connoisseur’s approach, which inevitably imposes restrictions on the questions raised and the types of research deemed appropriate. I had to remind students continually that ours was a more open-ended, exploratory, at times very experimental mode of identification—and that sometimes posing and answering basic questions is as instructive as following a model or developing a theory.

In the case of the bird of paradise, the student skipped over the basic question of what kind of bird he was actually looking at. It was not until he consulted a curator at the St. Louis Zoo (who identified the bird and told him about the species, which likely came from the Fiji Islands and had only been known to Westerners for a short time in the 1880s) that he went back to have a closer look and noticed not only specific features of the bird he’d missed before but also the other elements of the elaborate display, including the smaller red and green birds. Some of what the zoo curator told him seemed to reinforce his colonialism theory, but he soon found evidence that the Campbells had other reasons for interest in birds (they had a fairly sizable collection of both live and stuffed birds and many other bird- and pet-themed objects in the house). The student working on the medicine bottle label was likewise reluctant to start with obvious questions, even though in many ways the object—which was originally found concealed between the walls of the master bedroom—seemed to demand them. But the ground-level readings turned out to be significant, and her final paper

probed the various relationships—for example, between patient, doctor, and household “health” rituals—that are embodied in a single scrap of paper.

As my students were quick to observe, the ground-up approach is not as tidy in practice as some of the available schematics imply. For example, Fleming makes a clean distinction between contextual information (or “selected aspects of the artifact’s culture”) and current cultural meanings and values that does not stand up long in the CHM, where the two are rather messily intertwined.³³ In conceptualizing object-context relationships, I found it helpful to use archaeology metaphors to problematize the idea of working from the ground up. Imagining objects as embedded in multiple, interpenetrating layers of (literal and figurative) sediment, and object study as an excavation of those layers, allows us to think about cultural sites in both geographical/spatial and teleological terms, probing a host of vertically organized relationships (not just the ones registered on the historian’s horizontal time line) that bear on their perceived meanings in a changing culture.³⁴ It also counters the notion that we should treat objects as codes containing a single meaning (and that require experts to be cracked).

In developing this approach, I have taken cues from Bernard L. Herman, who argues that by “beginning with the physical and proceeding to the symbolic,” historical archaeology helps historians who often treat objects as “incidental illustrations” to more fully reconstruct their lived meanings.³⁵ In

³³ Fleming, “Artifact Study,” 154.

³⁴ There are many CHM objects whose “embedded” nature is quickly revealed when students begin to dig. For example, an elegant calling card engraved with the words “Mrs. Robert Campbell,” which was discovered inside an obsolete fireplace in the home (half-singed but intact), can be read as a tool and symbol of Victorian-parlor etiquette. This is the first interpretive move that students—and many historians—would want to make. But it can also be read in relationship to several other moments in the history of the home, including not only its use in countless antebellum calling rituals but the occasions of its being discarded, later salvaged by museum officials, and eventually used as an anchor for narratives about Virginia’s social status. In addition, it can be connected to other objects, moments in the history of the house, and cultural agents—e.g. (to name just a few), other monogrammed and hospitality-related objects (of which there are a great many); personal effects of Virginia’s that were (whether intentionally or unwittingly) preserved by her sons; other members of the household (including the servants who cleaned the fireplaces, as well as the printer, the stationer, and all the members of Virginia’s social circle throughout the last decades of her life); and other CHM evidence of her public persona. All of these represent vital dimensions of the object’s “life”—distinct layers of meaning that have accrued over time and continue to affect its perceived meaning now.

³⁵ Lu Ann De Cunzio and Bernard L. Herman, eds., *Historical Archaeology and the Study of American Culture* (Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1996), introduction, 31.

³¹ Abby Clouse, “Narratives of Value and the Antiques Roadshow: A Game of Recognitions,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 31, no. 1 (January 2008): 3.

³² Fleming, “Artifact Study,” 153–73; Jules Prown, “Style as Evidence,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 1980): 197–210.

the introduction to his study of the American town house, Herman describes the idea of lived meanings in terms of what he calls “presence of place”—“the combination of artifacts and behaviors that lend a locale its distinctive visual and cultural identity.” He explains presence of place as “relational,” relying on “associations found within the rooms and furnishings of buildings and, in telescopic fashion, on the associations between buildings and their settings on a larger geographical scale.” Herman advocates for a process of reading contextually, engaging with buildings and other material objects “in terms of design, construction, ornament, and settings” as well as “use, perception, imagination, and symbol.”³⁶ Social scientists Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton describe a “transactional” approach that is roughly analogous, in which one seeks to understand how objects “serve to express dynamic processes within people, among people, and between people and the total environment.”³⁷

Different as they may be when it comes to describing, for example, the lived experience and the urban environment, both methodologies aim to understand objects in complex relationships—the transactional model being more horizontally (socially) organized, and the archaeological one being more vertical. Juxtaposing them allows for deeper consideration of disciplinary and intellectual paradigms and invites students to conceptualize their work in more than one way and to begin to imagine research as a series of analytical moves and acts of engagement with the evidence. While their “excavations” were sometimes a bit rushed and their efforts to map the “total environment” of the CHM were necessarily incomplete, most left the course with a keen sense of the ways that such a site complicates their assumptions about cultural study.

Objectives and Outcomes

Compelling students to carefully excavate an object’s layers is bound up in a challenge that dogs not just programs like AMCS but the liberal arts as a whole: how best to achieve true multidisciplinary learning—in which students draw together different, perhaps incongruous ways of understanding

the same evidence and pursue an object of study into realms beyond their own discipline while still making use of their own field’s approaches. For this to occur, they needed an understanding of the ways knowledge is created and structured in various fields and the ability to conceptualize how projects make use of given methodologies and existing knowledge. By no means did my students come into AMCS 475 with this epistemological background and methodological skill; in many ways, the course had both to create the occasion for it and to support them as they developed it.

A second prerequisite for successful multidisciplinary learning is analytical skill: in this case, the ability to do object analysis that attends closely to “thing-ness” (in both the physical and the contextual or transactional sense). Most of the students already possessed this capacity but needed to develop the ability to imagine multiple interpretive possibilities that would take them beyond the routines and orthodoxies of their field. A third, closely related requirement is the capacity for creative research: not only identifying and engaging meaningfully with diverse resources but negotiating with competing interpretive possibilities. Being open to question-asking, resisting archetypes, and allowing things to get messy in the hope of generating new insights is a fourth necessity. The course succeeded in fostering multidisciplinary learning activity, although individual students’ abilities and skills developed unevenly in the process.

Eventually, the success of multidisciplinary learning is measured by students’ capacity for integrative learning: the ability to make “simple connections among ideas and experiences,” to “synthesize ... and transfer ... that learning to new, complex situations,” and “to identify plausible interpretations that emerge out of their webs of relationships.”³⁸ As this summary of skills suggests, advocates of integrative learning models place more emphasis on process than on product, urging models of teaching that “draw from multiple perspectives on a complex phenomenon for insights that can be integrated into a richer, more comprehensive understanding.”³⁹ I put far more emphasis on process than product as

³⁶ Bernard L. Herman, *Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780–1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Books, 2005), 2–4. If this book had been available at the time, it would have been required reading for AMCS 475.

³⁷ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 43.

³⁸ Association of American Colleges and Universities, “Integrative Learning VALUE Rubric,” <http://www.aacu.org/value/>. This rubric is one product of the Liberal Education and America’s Promise initiative, which aims to study college and university assessment practices.

³⁹ Julie Thompson Klein, “Integrative Learning and Interdisciplinary Studies,” *Peer Review* 7, no. 4 (Summer 2005): 8–10. See also Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings, *Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2004), 1–18.

well but designed the Cultural Biography assignment to test their ability not only to find a “richer, more comprehensive understanding” but to translate that understanding into an academic argument—which is to say, one that is plausible, critically informed, and supported by various forms of evidence.

While it could only partially illuminate the integrative learning process, AMCS 475 aimed to model object-relations work that (among other things): (1) helps students become comfortable with studying diverse sites and multiple types of artifacts, and willing to engage in a process-oriented investigation; (2) leads to unexpected insights while insisting on integrity of evidence gathering and interpretation; (3) encourages receptivity to different approaches and collaborations of the sort that characterize robust multidisciplinary learning; (4) preserves complexities of the sort that the CHM collection makes legible and culminates in a richly layered account of an object’s lives; (5) redefines student roles beyond passive museumgoers and amateurs-imitating-experts, urging them into the more exploratory realm of meaning excavation or object mapping; and (6) fosters critical engagement with cultural objects more generally and by extension with American culture. These aims align with those on the integrative learning VALUE rubric and, more generally, with various goals that are central to liberal education.⁴⁰

Admittedly, much of what my students produced was very exploratory, but it led to important methodological insights. As artifacts of their work show, the effort to document relationships was as important as the resulting interpretations. By figuring out how to render and interpret these relationships, they struggled productively with how to manage many kinds of information. Along the way, they identified a set of cultural ideas they cared about and pursued them as far as they could. Many experimented in their own ways to learn more about “thing-ness” and to connect the object to a network of in situ, household, regional, and cultural meanings.

For example, a member of the summer research team engaged in several kinds of localized exploration while researching an object of ambiguous status in the collection, *The Spencerian Book of Practical Penmanship* (1864), which is currently stored with other family books in one of the upstairs bedrooms-turned-library. The book’s enigmatic relationship

to the CHM collection—it is rarely shown to museumgoers and is a kind of composite (a mass-produced book with several personal notations and drawings in it, among other things)—did not hinder the student’s research. In seeking to answer the who/what/where/when/how questions, she examined how it had come to be part of a constellation of objects related to the education of the Campbell children and made connections to other writing-related implements, including a portable desk and an inkwell, and to other objects that were part of their early education and, later, their public lives. The student produced a presentation documenting her who/what/where/when/how findings for both the penmanship book and one of the maps drawn inside the book (see tables 1–2 and figs. 18–19; she also considered doodles and other school work completed by the Campbell sons).

She even tried her hand at writing in the book’s style, using reproduction penmanship practice sheets. Such creative exploration allowed her to think in a number of ways about the object’s “place” in the CHM collection—meaning not only its actual position in the house but its perceived significance. Eventually, the student went on to develop a teaching module for K–12 teachers based on her ideas about the penmanship book. Envisioning teaching others about her object as well as various contexts of the book’s use that she had explored—including what she called “A Typical Day” of the Campbell brothers, the “Necessary Knowledge” that was part of their early education, and their “Interactions with Others”—got her thinking about

Table 1
Penmanship Book Artifact Details: “The Five W’s”

Attributes	Description
What	<i>Spencerian System of Practical Penmanship</i>
Who	Belonged to James A. Campbell
When	1864
Where	Published in New York by the American Educational Series of school and college textbooks
How	Most likely given out at school, standard (educational text)
Dimensions/ material/wear	8.5" × 8.5"; paper, poor condition: some staining, brittle, broken pieces
Other details of note	Includes instructions for hand positions for right and left hand, penholding, movement of fingers, lesser and whole arm, and commencing and closing the exercise

SOURCE.—AMCS Collection.

⁴⁰ See Association of American Colleges and Universities, “Integrative Learning VALUE Rubric”; Association of American Colleges and Universities, “Statement on Liberal Learning,” <http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/pdf/integrativelearning.pdf>.

Table 2
Maps Artifact Details: “The Five W’s”

Attributes	Description
What	Maps of Western Hemisphere, North and South America
Who	Drawn by Hugh Campbell Jr.
When	Because Hugh’s name is on the map, estimate that he drew them after 1859, when he moved from being tutored by his mother to attending Smith Academy. However, because New Granada is still on [one of] the map[s], it is estimated that the map(s) were created very close to 1859. (The Republic of New Granada changed names in 1858 to Granadine Confederacion.)
Other details of note	Backward “S,” misspelled “Feejee”

SOURCE.—AMCS Collection.

other objects in the collection related to the brothers’ public lives (see app. E). Since then, this student has taken some of her public school students to the CHM for field trips to invite them to engage with objects as she had done that summer with our research group.

At times, AMCS 475 students were likewise able to think beyond the limits of their own learning and to ask what is deemed “worth knowing” about an object. This became a pressing question in some cases—especially where the object they chose refused to yield information from the usual approaches. I have already mentioned how one summer researcher was challenged to find evidence that the bird of paradise signified the Campbells’ colonialist attitudes. In AMCS 475, an art/AMCS double major found herself wrestling with some of the premises of art history as she developed a reading of an especially fascinating object: Robert Campbell’s fringed buckskin coat (a gift he received during his years as a fur trader and Indian negotiator; the CHM also has a smaller one made for his son). While it was covered in quillwork whose design begged for iconographic or stylistic analysis, she found this approach did not help her to answer questions about the object’s significance in the CHM context, and she chose instead to draw connections to a range of other objects in the collection, including paintings, souvenirs, and a bearskin rug that at some point went missing from the museum, all of which illuminated family memory of Robert’s experiences on the western frontier.

As students tested different approaches and encountered dead ends, they uncovered their own

(and others’) predilections, biases, and limitations and found themselves advocating for an expanded view of their artifact that required a range of disciplinary insights. I heard them saying different versions of “But it’s not that simple!” to each other and, most important, to themselves. Most developed a better understanding of how cultural objects “live” in many overlapping contexts, including the students’ own time as visitors to the house and students of the collection, and of how they might apply this concept to their own fields as well as in future multidisciplinary projects. But they did hit many dead ends, and they complained about them loudly at times. The challenge that I faced was persuading them to see the dead ends as part of the process and to cope with the ambiguities of their own research as well as the limitations of empirical analysis. In the summer, we managed this by inviting the students to document their methodologies as they went—to interrogate their own questions, assumptions, and so forth as well as to keep track of where their evidence led them. This documentation helped them to perceive the dead ends as intellectual hurdles—and in some cases helped them to realize that existing scholarship has limitations in dealing with objects such as these.

Ongoing Implications and Insights

The students’ good work—both their experimental thinking and excavation activities, as well as the resulting interpretations of artifacts—informed a number of subsequent classroom projects. In the following summer, as I have mentioned, six undergraduates and two graduate students from a wide range of disciplines worked both as a team and as individuals to test the object-relations model using the CHM collection. Only some of them were doing this work for credit (several were paid research assistants), so the student-student academic exchanges were qualitatively very different—far breezier and less anxiety-filled—than those in AMCS 475. This was usually good because it allowed for candid conversation about the tensions between pedagogical and practical outcomes in the context of a project that aims to have both. This atmosphere also mitigated the effects of Campbell House fatigue as experienced by AMCS 475 students and allowed me to be a bit more hands-on at critical junctures.

In preparing the summer research team to work with objects, I walked them through a very compressed version of the course activities (lacking the theoretical and historical readings). These included several preliminary rounds of artifact study,



Fig. 18. P. R. Spencer, *Spencerian System of Practical Penmanship*, Common School Series, belonging to James Campbell, 1864. From P. R. Spencer, *Spencerian System of Practical Penmanship*, Common School Series (New York: Ivison, Phinney, Blakeman, 1864), front cover. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

in which they worked together to explore objects' meanings in the context of a given set ("set" meaning everything from a few prechosen artifacts with a specific relationship to all the artifacts in a room or in the CHM collection as a whole). Their research focused on a single object whose relationships they were to trace as far as they could. Over the course of a few weeks, they developed research and interpretive modules of various sizes that expressed the relationships they had traced as well as the overall excavation process. They also provided input on the experience of doing this kind of work outside the confines of a regular semester-based course—a model we would need to develop in order to sustain a larger CHM collaboration.

At the time, our intention was to make some of the research team's work available in the form of an

interactive website that, among other things, would introduce the CHM collection to the public, demonstrate some of the many approaches to object mapping, and invite visitors (AMCS students, local grade-schoolers, the broader public) to contribute to object maps. This was a major part of the reason we asked the team to fully document their methodologies and to think explicitly about what it would mean to share their findings with the public. We still would like to do this, but when we paused to seek funding sources, we began to reassess technological aspects of the project.

The larger digital archives initiative of which the CHM project would be a part, American Lives, has evolved considerably under new leadership in our program, while dramatic advances in full-text searching and database technologies during the



Fig. 19. Hugh Campbell, freehand map of western hemisphere and eastern Pacific Ocean, ca. 1859. (Campbell House Museum Collection.)

past several years have begun to suggest other ways of documenting student CHM object research.⁴¹ For example, social-networking software would allow us to document the complex webs of association and meaning that emerge. Other visual-mapping technologies might allow us to build on a small experiment in GIS (geographic information systems) that one of our graduate students completed during the summer 2006 project, in which she created maps of objects' positions in the Campbell House parlor (fig. 20) and their places of origin (where they were manufactured or purchased). In theory, these would enhance the collaborative aspects of the project, inviting a wider audience's contri-

bution to research and conversation about the lives of objects.

AMCS has also gleaned a number of curricular insights from these CHM experiments. Although not all our students pursue material culture research, object study now features more prominently in our program on a number of levels and has created many occasions to talk about the energizing potential (and challenges) of a multidisciplinary study of things. A 200-level course that borrows some of its concepts and tools but spends more time on the basics of object analysis that students need to do more sophisticated research later (and that more fully interrogates the American relationship to things) now serves as one of several possible entry points for the AMCS program. When I do a CHM case study in this course, I ask students to do their own object maps and to develop other ways of representing

⁴¹ The online interface for the digital archives project, American Lives, is currently being rebuilt. For a glimpse into the American Lives project of years past, see <http://amlives.artsci.wustl.edu>.

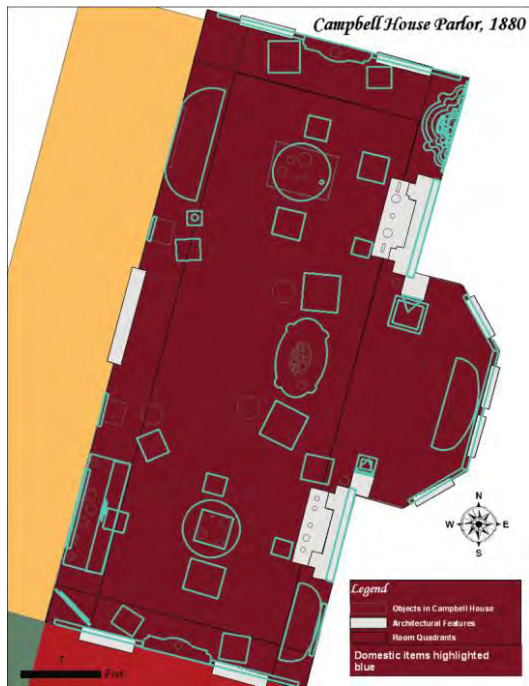


Fig. 20. GIS map of parlor showing object placement, 2007. (AMCS Collection.)

spatial, household, and CHM relationships. Although I occasionally show them the examples created by previous students, including GIS and hand-drawn maps, I usually begin by having them struggle on their own or in groups. Last spring, I took students from this course to Bellefontaine, a nineteenth-century cemetery where the Campbells are buried, and asked them to map the family plot as an object, and this was a productive exercise that we referred to often during the rest of the semester.

AMCS 475 retains its basic function as a methods seminar and is typically taught as a case study in multidisciplinary learning. But it is now a junior-level requirement; this leaves room in the subsequent year for a required senior capstone project of the students' own designing, which, whether it takes the form of a multimedia presentation or a conventional honors thesis, applies AMCS 475 discoveries. The most dramatic result of the course is the fact that our new stand-alone major, established in 2011, now strongly emphasizes methodological training and multidisciplinary inquiry at earlier stages. The new requirements provide more time for the kind of incremental work I was experimenting with in AMCS 475 and for more "intentional" as well as "integrative" learning.⁴² They also create occasions

⁴² Huber and Hutchings, *Integrative Learning*, 5–8.

for field-based study that allow students to explore cultural objects in real-world total environments. In a way, these are a direct response to the challenges I have described above, which others in the program had observed as well. The form that specific requirements have taken has also been shaped by the CHM experience.

To sum up the compelling insights that AMCS 475 and its related projects have inspired, let me briefly return to the passage from the *Post-Dispatch* with which I opened, where St. Louisans are invited to step through a door that has "swung open into the past, revealing mid-nineteenth-century St. Louis in one of its most glamorous moods." The image of the open door expresses some of the paradoxical ideas the course introduced. On the one hand, it is a distorting assumption to say that the CHM "stands almost exactly as it was in [the family's] time," wholly intact, a perfect specimen that should simply be cherished. All acts of cultural study have the potential to become nostalgic in this way. As I attempted to suggest throughout the course, students should not assume that accessing the meanings of objects from that period is simply a matter of walking through an open door. On the other hand, starting with what one sees upon walking through the door—with the physical facts and other evidence of "lived realities"—is vital to any ground-up approach to objects. As long as it involves consideration of contextual factors that create a sense of that value and makes room for complexity, this approach is a way to engage with concrete meanings that inhere in objects.

It may be precisely the allure of the "open door" that allows us to explore the CHM collection creatively—to interrogate rather than to celebrate its intactness. As my students helped to demonstrate, any one object's meanings are many, and its various relationships are moderately traceable, if not fully revelatory. The house is a kind of mock-up of a "total environment" or at least provides an occasion to excavate some of the layers that did and do comprise the Campbells' cultural world. And because the museum's staff has literally opened the CHM door in this way, providing unusual levels of access and means of multidisciplinary exploration and making the excavation process a fun and collaborative experience, students can find their own sense of connection with the house. This connection perhaps is not wholly unlike the one that William Clark Society members sought to provide the St. Louis public when they opened the museum in 1943.

Appendix A

Campbell House Chronology

1851	John Hall buys Lucas Place lot and builds a house at 20 Lucas Place.
1853	Hall sells the house on a smaller lot to Cornelia Wilson.
1854	Robert and Virginia Campbell purchase 20 Lucas Place and begin to decorate it with furniture imported from Philadelphia.
1855	Rear flounder wing of the house extended 15 feet to create a larger kitchen and more servant rooms on the second floor.
1856–57	The Campbells purchase lot immediately east of the house with 54 feet of frontage on Lucas Place. Lot used for garden and carriage house.
1867–68	Extensive renovations include combination of front and back parlors, addition of three-story bay on the east façade, and addition of three rooms on top of the existing two-story flounder.
1875–85	Water closet moved and bathtub added on second floor.
1879	Robert Campbell (b. 1804) dies at home.
1882	Virginia Campbell (b. 1822) dies at home, leaving a trust that divides the estate into three equal shares for sons James, Hazlett, and Hugh.
1883	Virginia's mother, Lucy Ann Kyle, dies at the Campbell house.
1884–85	Porch enclosed and enlarged on the first floor to create the morning room. Set of sixty photographs of the interior and exterior of the house taken.
1890	James Campbell (b. 1860) dies in Paris.
ca. 1900	Machine-cut parquet floor trim installed in the dining room, small-pattern carpets replace earlier large patterns, walls covered in canvas and painted, kitchen modernized, steam heat added, and art glass windows installed. Electrification of the house begins. Many Lucas Place homes converted to boardinghouses and commercial properties.
1931	Hugh Campbell (b. 1847) dies at home. Estate inventory taken.
1932–38	Complex legal challenges to Hugh's will raised over several years until a 1938 decision in the Missouri Supreme Court upholds the document. Speculation about the fate of the Campbell property intensifies.
1938	Hazlett Campbell (b. 1858) dies at home. His \$1.85 million fortune becomes the target of an international lawsuit with 1,200 claimants. Thirty-seven legitimate heirs finally named by 1940.
1940–41	Campbell cousins inherit the house and choose to auction its contents. Local and national officials choose suitable material for auction. Preservationists in the newly formed William Clark Society launch a "Save the Campbell House" campaign and use the funds raised to purchase much of the house's contents at the February 1941 auction by Ben J. Selkirk and Sons.
1942	Campbell House Foundation incorporated and takes control of the house and collection with local funds, including a \$10,000 donation from department store Stix, Baer and Fuller.
1943	Campbell House refurbished, and the museum opens to the public. Fundraising to support the Campbell House Foundation continues.
1945	<i>Life</i> magazine features the Campbell House in a multipage color spread.
1967–68	Museum interiors redecorated.
1970	Rear stairwell and service space added.
1973	The Campbell House featured in <i>Architectural Digest</i> . Dozens of ca. 1880s albumen photos depicting the house's interiors, façade, and portions of the neighborhood discovered in a trash bin and donated to the museum.
1995	Planning for the restoration begins.
1998	Carriage house restoration completed.
2000	Restoration based on ca. 1880s photos begins on house.
2001	Exterior restoration and mechanical updates complete. Interior restoration begins.
2004	Interior restoration 75 percent complete; work begins on parlor.

Appendix B

Course Description and Learning Objectives for L98 475: American Culture: Methods and Visions

Even the humblest material artifact, which is the product and symbol of a particular civilization, is an emissary of the culture out of which it comes. (T. S. Eliot, *Notes toward the Definition of Culture*, 1948)

This course is an experiment in the multidisciplinary study of American culture. Through a series of interconnected case studies focusing on objects and archives, we will explore different disciplinary approaches to material culture, including those offered by history, anthropology, historical archaeology, art history, and museum studies. Along the way we will consider the advantages and challenges inherent in such work, examining some of the models of multidisciplinary study available to the student of American culture, and asking how different approaches illuminate objects and their cultural meanings.

Our main focus will be the Campbell House, a St. Louis house museum located at 1508 Locust, not far from the downtown / Washington Avenue areas. The Campbell House is the only private home still standing from a once-exclusive neighborhood known as Lucas Place, and it provides a unique occasion to engage with a complex cultural object whose many contexts are no longer wholly visible but may be "excavated" using a material culture perspective. Refurbished to its circa 1885 condition between 1995 and 2004, the museum now displays a wide range of objects associated with nineteenth-century St. Louis as well as the Campbell family, including 90 percent of their original furnishings, textiles, collectibles, and personal papers. The collection is a "local" one, but it has national significance and can be used to study everything from the Civil War and immigration to the fur trade and the settlement of the west. Our primary concern with these objects will be to consider their links to identifiable practices, ideas, people, and social spaces, as well as to other cultural objects and sites. We will ask what these objects had to do with one another and the life of the family, the neighborhood, and the city, and will explore the museum as a cultural institution to see what its collections and interpretive practices reveal about conceptions of nineteenth-century America at different times. These are only some of the many layers of our objects' "cultural lives" that we will document and discuss.

The course does not aim to provide a complete study of the field of material culture, nor does it aspire to treat the period in question to a rigorous historical study. Instead, it offers a body of material objects as a particularly rich case study in American culture. We will ask how the work of other disciplines might be brought to bear on such a collection and, conversely, how a consideration of such material transforms our approach to work in those disciplines and AMCS.

In addition, you can expect to:

- Attentively study objects for their material, symbolic, and contextual "facts";

- Learn how to link these facts to specific contexts and relationships (focusing on people, spaces, sites, ideas, uses, etc.);
- Get comfortable asking many different questions and testing specific methods of analysis for their suitability;
- Develop both a flexible vocabulary for describing objects and a robust set of strategies for researching their contexts and relationships;
- Learn about different disciplinary approaches to culture in general and to material culture in particular (as well as local resources that are relevant to such study);
- Develop a flexible way of thinking about objects as cultural evidence, learning how to combine different approaches (and to choose appropriately from a range of options);
- Apply different approaches appropriately in researching your final interpretive analysis of a chosen object;
- Produce a final presentation with visual content in which you synthesize a range of ideas and experiences from the term, describe your research methodology, and summarize your findings/interpretations;
- Learn to apply knowledge and skills from this course to other research contexts.

Appendix C

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Appendix D

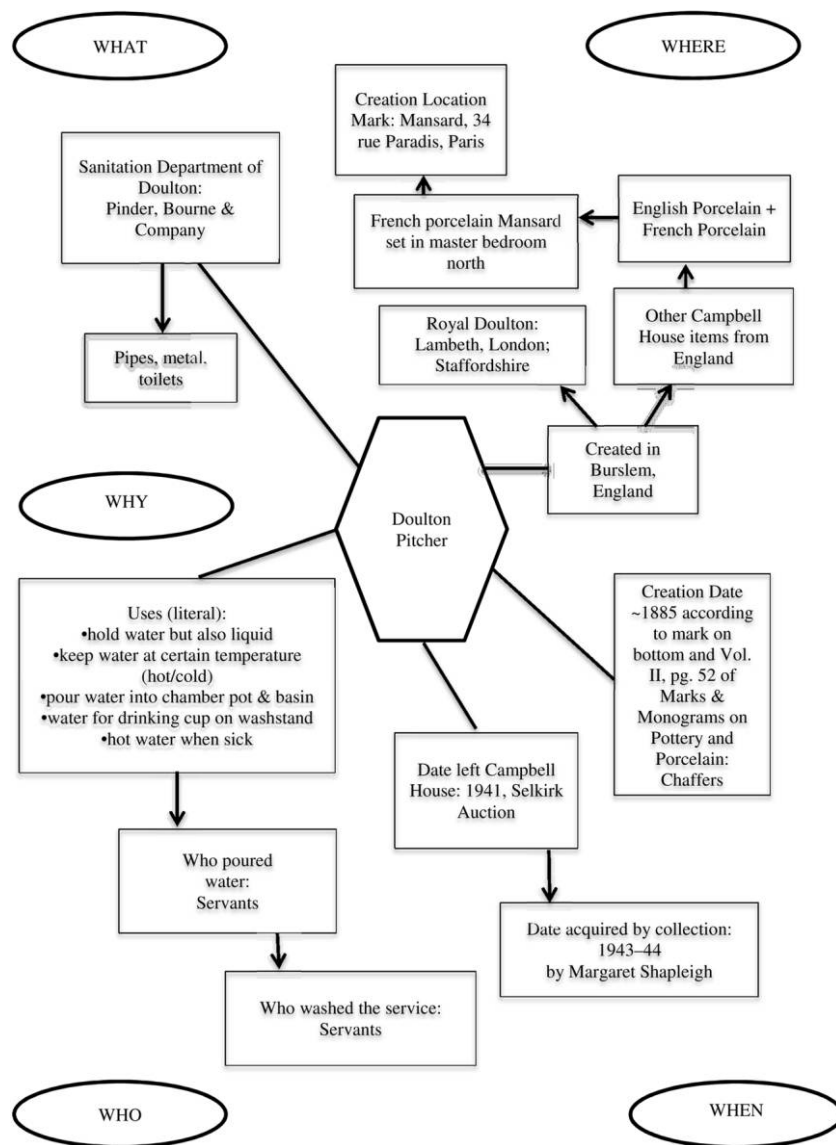


Fig. D1. Selections from student-created object relations map for pitcher from the Doulton porcelain toilet set, 2007. (AMCS Collection.)

Appendix E

Artifact Relationships: Desk, Mirror, and School Documents

Desk

The desk was supposedly portable, to be able to carry on trips. Often, businessmen (as well as military officials, captains on boats, and merchants) would carry these cases with them on trips relating to their occupation.

Mirror

The mirror, as proclaimed by Samuel Scottron, allowed the onlooker to “see himself as others see him.” The placement of this object in the library leads me to believe that it was also used in business endeavors to allow the Campbell in charge a glimpse of himself before he went off to make business arrangements.

School Documents

The school documents demonstrate what was considered the general knowledge of well-to-do young men in

this time period. Because of the status of the Campbells and the list of schools attended, it is easy to assume that these documents were preparatory of some sort. In researching the places on the map, as well as looking at the Campbell papers at the Mercantile [Library], it is easy to see that a general knowledge of geography, as well as good penmanship, were necessary in the line of work the Campbell sons were in (that line of work being over-

seers of the estate, accountants of the estate occasionally, charitable givers, and businessmen).

Relationship

Therefore, I have concluded that the main relationship between these artifacts is one of materials used by the Campbells in their business endeavors.