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From the Cornell Diaries

Harold Hancock

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Recommended Citation

Hancock, Harold, "From the Cornell Diaries" (1890). *The Lucinda Lenore Merriss Cornell Collection: Ephemera*. 10.

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...lived in Westerville. As one might expect
...the Union army and a member of the 128th
...John Cornell was a Republican. During the
...the 1860s she sold a few quilts to the Republican who re-
...in a street corner in Westerville. She
...and was deeply
...and believed in the rights of the colored people.

...a community with high moral standards in
...the late nineteenth century. The family lived well into
...the village life, but there were no social clubs or
...belonged to a church and was a member of the church.

THE DIARIES
OF
MRS. LUCINDA MERRISS CORNELL

...the diary was kept for many years. While outside
...the diary was kept for many years. While outside
...the diary was kept for many years. While outside
...the diary was kept for many years. While outside

Harold Hancock,
editor

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Lucinda Merrill
Westerville, Ohio
1860-1880

PREFACE

The diaries of Mrs. Lucinda Merriss Cornell are the property of Mrs. Merriss Cornell. Recognizing their historic importance, on behalf of the Cornell family she has made them available for study.

The diaries are unique, recording for almost every year from 1855 to 1911 daily happenings, first in Hilliard and then in Westerville.

The Westerville Historical Society sponsored the publication of this volume as a contribution to the history of the community.

Dr. Harold Hancock, chairman of the Department of History and Political Science of Otterbein College, and author of volumes on the history of Westerville and Otterbein College, edited the excerpts from the fifty-five volumes and wrote the introduction. With Miss Marion Snavelly, he prepared a typewritten transcript of the diaries. Copies are owned by Mrs. Merriss Cornell, the Otterbein College Library and Dr. Hancock.

The Westerville Historical Society appreciates the cooperation of Mrs. Merriss Cornell and the Cornell family in permitting the preparation of the typescript and the publication of these excerpts from the diaries.

THE DIARIES OF MRS. LUCINDA MERRISS CORNELL

I--THE AUTHOR

How did our ancestors live one hundred years ago? A unique opportunity to study this question arose when the diaries of Mrs. Lucinda Merriss Cornell became available for study. A resident first of Hilliard and then after 1864 of Westerville, she faithfully kept a diary from 1855 to 1911. Seldom did she miss recording the happenings, events and activities of the day. Impersonal and filled with the trivia of daily life, the little volumes tell us much about the way of life of a past generation and the experiences of one person during a lifetime.

Probably the Merriss family was of French Huguenot descent. Members of the family moved to Ohio from Rutland, Vermont, early in the nineteenth century. Lucinda's father, Benjamin J. Merriss, married Angeline Straine on April 30, 1824, in Perry Township, Franklin County, when he was twenty-two years old, and she was eighteen. From this marriage came nine children, but only four lived to maturity and married: Abigail, Ellery, Lucinda and Franklin Jerrome.

Like most Ohioans in the early nineteenth century, Lucinda's father was a farmer. He lived near Hilliard and raised grain, orchard products and cattle on a large farm. Lucinda was used to farm life and the many duties it involved.

In 1855 when Lucinda was twenty-three, she began to keep a diary, though she never revealed the reasons for doing so. Presumably *with others as did many other young women in the 19th cen*
so most diaries stop making entries, but she kept writing
she wished to record how hard and conscientiously she worked. The

They diaries are filled with references to household tasks such as sewing, quilting, scrubbing, gardening and cooking. Not only does she mention the names and activities of her family, but also the names of hundreds *in her day more by year*

the diaries reveal her love for gardening & flowers, her int in reading people, & her devotion to her family
of friends, acquaintances and merchants. She carefully recorded deaths, births and funerals. The diaries shed light on occupations, education, health, religion, politics, recreation and social happenings, and reveal how one family lived and faced problems for almost half a century.

In the 1850's Lucinda was a restless young woman. At that time women did not have many ^{or} opportunities to work away from home. She frequently aided her married sister with her housework, sometimes did sewing for people, and occasionally taught district school, but mainly she ^{as}-sted with family household duties.

On several occasions she was courted by neighbors such as by a choral director of a singing school and by a nearby farmer, but nothing came out of these romances. Through friends who had moved to Westerville, she met John Bishop Cornell, a young farmer and Civil War soldier. When she was on a visit to relatives in the west in 1863, she initiated correspondence with him (a draft of her first letter appears in a diary). The next year they were married at her home on December 27, 1864. *A photograph taken about this time showed her as an attractive woman*
Lucinda's husband was of Huguenot or Dutch descent. His ancestors ~~were~~ lived in New York in the seventeenth century. His father, Elias, moved to Franklin County from Dutchess County, New York along with some of his neighbors before 1820, and bought land in Blendon Township. John Bishop Cornell was born in 1828 and trained by his father in farming. Following his father's death in 1844, he continued to farm on the family property located on South State Street (present vicinity of Cornell Court) and on East Walnut Street.

The move to Westerville was a traumatic experience for Lucinda, especially as she and her husband lived with her mother-in-law and sister-in-law in separate quarters in a large rambling farm house on South State Street (slightly north of the railroad tracks on the left side of South State *east or west?*)

Street; the house was torn down in the 1950's). She was frequently

lonesome and unhappy. In 1866 Lucinda and her husband moved out to

the "east place" owned by the Cornells on East Walnut Street,

and they were much happier. Here her first son was born in 1866, but

he died at the age of months and was buried in the newly

opened Otterbein Cemetery where his tombstone with its little white

lamb can still be seen. She was somewhat consoled by the birth of

her daughter, Alice Blanche in 1868.

Upon the death of her mother-in-law in , Lucinda and

her husband returned to live in the "home place." on South State Street.

There she continued to live the remainder of her life.

were

Born in rapid succession/other children: Otto von Bismarck, 1870

(his middle name was dropped during World War I); Abbie Geneva (1871);

Honori (1873); the twins, Charles Roland , 1876(died same year) and

Frank Holland, 1876; and Paris Royal, 1878.

Lucinda's marriage was probably saved by the move to a

separate home on East Walnut Street and by her children. During

her first months in Westerville she expressed doubts that she could

ever be happy ~~xxxxxx~~ with John. She was thirty-two at the

time of her marriage, and he was thirty-six. She did not get along

well with her mother-in-law, and she felt lonesome when John often spent

the evenings up town or at his lodge. Things changed for the better

when they moved into their own home, and she gave birth to her first

child in 1866.

Here were her first 2 children Harry in 1866 who died at Abbie St. in

38 bought the old cherv farm on E. W. St. to live in a lodge

amid name changed by Bishop

later changed to B

attachment to her mother

at the home of her mother-in-law

Her husband was a farmer, owning about 25 acres? fronting along South State Street and about 50 acres about two miles away on East Walnut Street. He engaged in general farming, raising wheat, corn and oats, cattle, a few sheep, and poultry. By producing practically all the food for his growing family, he and his wife managed to get along on very little. In 1872 cash income for the entire year was less than \$700. The income of his neighbors was similar. In the 1870's this figure was equivalent to the salaries paid college professors at Otterbein University and higher than the incomes of public school teachers in Westerville.

Lucinda came to love and respect her husband, as they faced together problems of family life and the bringing up of a large family. The death of her husband in ^{MO, 1885} 1855 from [?] was a great shock. It is significant that we do not have a ~~diary for her of that year, but that of her daughter instead.~~ Left a widow with six children, the youngest of whom was seven, she struggled to keep the family together, running the farm and receiving a small Civil War pension. By the strictist economy she made ends meet.

Her children were a great comfort to her, but she also worried about their welfare, activities and duties. Blanche, her eldest daughter, became her confidante. In general, she was closer to the girls in the family than to the boys. Although the "little boys", Roy and Holly worked hard at farm chores, she sometimes criticized them for going off to watch baseball games or to fish instead of working at home. She was especially critical of Otto, her oldest son, whom she would have liked to take a more active part in farming. But on the whole, she was proud and pleased with her family, and she ~~lived mainly for them.~~

devoted herself to household + farm duties & their welfare

It was a pleasure for her to see ³~~three~~ of her six children graduate from Otterbein University in the 1890's. Blanche took ^{her oldest daughter} special courses in music there in the conservatory, but did not follow a course leading to a degree. ^{Otto received a degree from the Ohio} Geneva became a school teacher, while Ori married a medical student and died a few months later from complications in pregnancy. Blanche married a YMCA official. Royal and Holland carried on the family farm. In her last years she was happiest surrounded by her grandchildren.

As Lucinda aged and suffered from the infirmities of old age, her daughter-in-law, Rose, Royal's wife, took over the domestic duties in the family home. She died in 1911 at the age of 79, having lived a full life.

Although Lucinda worked very hard during her marriage at household duties and in rearing a family, and frequently complained of overwork, in retrospect she regarded ^{her} ~~those~~ ^{of many} years mostly as happy ones. She and John had come to respect and love one another, and they were united in the common task of earning a living and in rearing a family, just as were thousands of other Americans.

Her son, Otto, made this final entry in his mother's diary:

October 2, 1911

My dear Mother died this day. She was my best friend on this earth and I hope to be with her soon.

I realize, more than ever, how great was her love for me and life will never be as sweet any more.

My God help me to endure this great sorrow for my heart never was so touched or the cup so bitter.

Otto

Finis

Both in Hilliard and in Westerville, Lucinda Merriss Cornell was accustomed to a household that was almost self-sufficient. Vegetables came from the garden, fruit from the orchard, and meat, poultry, milk and butter from the barnyard. Sheep supplied wool to be spun and woven into cloth. Only sugar, species, drugs and some clothing and leather were purchased outside of the home. *spun*

This sort of living required that the housewife be busy from morning to night, performing a multitude of tasks that are accomplished in easier ways today. She gardened, canned, assisted with butchering, dried, stored and canned fruits and vegetables, wove cloth, knit, ~~sewed~~ and churned. All of these things were done in addition to the usual household duties such as manually washing clothing, scrubbing, cooking large quantities of food and caring for young children. No wonder that Lucinda at times complained of being tired ~~out~~ and exhausted. Only occasionally did she have assistance in laundrying or after the birth of a child. When her children grew older, they were of great assistance in performing these many chores.

One of the glories of nineteenth century America was an abundance of food. In season Americans enjoyed fruits, berries and a wide assortment of vegetables. Lucinda studied seed catalogues and exchanged seeds and slips with neighbors. She noted in her diary the appearance of the first peas, strawberries, peaches and new potatoes. She took pride in her large vegetable garden and took care of it mainly by herself. The amount of food preserved and stored for the use of her family seems incredible, even though her family consisted of eight persons. She recorded the preparation of hundreds of glasses of jelly, gallons of apple butter, ^a and/hundred quarts of peaches annually. In addition, she also dried apples, peaches and pumpkin, packed gallons of krout and filled her root cellar with cabbage, carrots, potatoes and apples.

From these preparations one might conclude that she could feed an army with her supplies, and on occasion she almost did! *It was*
meaning not clear, unusual was ~~it~~ not to have one or more guests for dinner (served in the middle of the day) or supper, *st* that she noted the ~~fact~~ *these rare occasions when* in her diary. *no guests shared meal*

Guests were served hearty breakfasts of pancakes, doughnuts, dinners fried mush or ham and eggs, and once turkey. Favorites ~~meals~~ consisted of roast chicken or chicken pies, spareribs or roast pork with an abundance of vegetables and hearty desserts such as pie, cake or strawberry shortcake. Supper apparently consisted of left overs from dinner and included dessert. By today's standards the diet *ates* would be considered starchy and full of carbohydrates, but it should be remembered that members of the family frequently engaged in hard physical work.

The kitchen was a busy place. The first thing to be done in preparing breakfast was to build a fire in the stove. Her family was so large that she usually baked 6 or 8 loaves of bread several times a week and six or eight pies at one time. Before Christmas she baked as many as twenty-five mince pies at one time, using her own mince meat prepared after ~~but~~ *T*chering. Breakfast was usually served at six o'clock (classes at Otterbein University began at 7 o'clock), dinner at 12, and supper at 6.

Monday was wash day. Often it took the entire day to boil the white and colored clothing separately. In later years her daughters did the washing, and sometimes a woman was hired to do it and the ironing.

House cleaning took place in the spring and fall. This meant that the carpets were taken up and beaten with a rug beater over a clothes line and then retacked. The stove in the parlor was taken down and placed in storage until needed again in the fall. Curtains were washed, and the walls wiped down.

When Lucinda moved to Westerville in 1864, water was drawn from a well, and bathing was performed in a wash tub. Not until the village secured a water system in 1903 was it possible to take a bath with running water. Bathing was such an important event that throughout her life she recorded her weekly baths in her diary.

Clothing for men and women was manufactured at home. Dresses and hats were turned or re^mtrimed or altered to fit someone else in the family. Old dresses could be made into aprons. Children wore duplicates of the attire of their parents. When John died in 1885, his old army overcoat was made into a coat for one of his sons. Lucinda's wedding dress was made into a dress for one of her daughters in 1890. Old discarded clothing was saved, and frequently used in making quilts or in rag carpets. Customarily it took eight to ten yards of material in the 1870's to make a dress. Percale and gingham were favorite materials, while dresses for Sunday and special occasions were made of silk. At that time Balmoral styles (probably named after Queen Victoria's castle) and Garbielle ^{waist} styles were popular. Fashions were studied in women's magazines.

Even in the evening Lucinda did not sit down with her hands folded. She was either reading, sewing, mending or knitting. In 1873 she purchased her first sewing machine, and it was a great boom when everything from underwear to men's shirts, suits and overcoats were manufactured at home. Today we have almost forgotten that the word "manufacture" means to make by hand.

11
news

Both John and Lucinda Cornell were educated at district schools, and they wished for their children to receive good educations. The Cornell children first attended district schools in the country and later the Westerville school. All of the children ~~were~~ graduated from high school, and three received degrees from Otterbein University. Duties at home sometimes hampered attendance, especially of the "little boys," Holland and Roy.

Otterbein University at this time was a small struggling institution with many more students in the preparatory department than in its college program. It was proud of its music conservatory. Blanche and Honori excelled in playing the piano and organ. The Cornell children were active in college organizations, ~~but~~ Geneva became a a ~~and~~ president of literary society and Otto was a treasurer. Roy and Holland were frequent spectators at college baseball and football games.

The Cornell home was a popular visiting place for students. They ate meals there, enjoyed social evenings with popcorn, and studied their lessons with the Cornell children. Often the girls were escorted home from church by male students. Sometimes visitors played games or danced. Two of the girls married Otterbein graduates.

Lucinda Cornell was a great reader and encouraged her children to read. She subscribed to such magazines for women as Household, Peterson's and Arthur's and later to the Ladies Home Journal. She even solicited magazine subscriptions. In later life she read daily the Ohio State Journal. She read popular novels of the day, religious works and the Bible. Sometimes she read aloud stories from the Youth's Companion to her children.

Religion played an important part in family life. The Cornell children attended church and Sabbath school on Sunday morning and sometimes services at night. They participated in Quarterly meetings, Sunday school entertainments, class meetings, prayer meetings and revivals. While they were Methodists, they sometimes attended services of the other denominations in the village. In contrast to the participation of her husband and children in such activities, Lucinda seldom attended services. She stayed at home and prepared the dinner for the family, taking the opportunity to spend the day reading and resting.

The principal form of entertainment was visiting. Mrs. Cornell carefully recorded the names of numerous visitors to her household, as well as the homes in which she visited. With some of her neighbors she was on such familiar terms that she saw them once or twice every day. Visitors from out of town, mostly relatives, came to stay for a few days or a week or two or three, bringing with them trunks. Lucinda indicated her resentment at the continued presence of some of these guests by writing that Aunt Jennie or some other relatives was "still here."

The Cornell children founded a multitude of activities in which to engage. There were socials, birthday parties, exhibitions, and religious activities. After they entered college they joined literary societies with weekly meetings, special public exhibitions and festivities during Commencement week. Baseball and football attracted them as spectators. The college also provided an inexpensive lecture series with speakers and musical entertainment. Mrs. Cornell sometimes attended college events.

play at rel. exercises
she belonged to the woman and
the GAR
Wed. were usually held at home
rather than at church. The bride &
groom wore new clothing. Their
"Sun bed" or new clothing, etc

Weyant⁷-12-

The Town Hall and Wyatt's Hall (third floor of brick building at *South east* corner of State and East Main) were favorite places for exhibitions and plays. In 1886 Lucinda recorded the death of two children who were injured in a panic flight down the steps from the third floor when a lamp was turned over at a performance of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

The construction of the interurban line in 1894 made easily accessible Minerva Park Casino and Columbus. Lucinda sometimes attended family reunions of the Westervelt and Lawson families there in the Casino, while her children enjoyed plays and concerts. Her children also attended concerts and operas in Columbus.

The most popular holidays were the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Fireworks and parades often enlivened the Fourth of July. Thanksgiving was a family holiday at which relatives and friends were guests at a turkey or chicken dinner followed by mince or pumpkin pie. At Christmas simple presents, often homemade, were exchanged such as aprons, mittens and scarves, and another bounteous dinner was enjoyed.

Little girl was paid to Max in the Minerva near Hill
Ret. 1865
The first reference to a Christmas tree in the Cornell home was in ~~1865~~ *1865*.

So often were members of the family ill that it was a matter of comment in her diary if everyone was well. The children had all the common children's diseases such as measles, mumps and chicken pox, and "cholera morbis" was a frequent complaint. Lucinda usually took care of the children, using simple home remedies. Only in extreme cases was the doctor called. A visit by the doctor at home in the 1860's cost fifty cents. Sometimes the doctor's bill was paid with hams or chickens.

The Cornell family frequently visited the dentist. Dr. Custer was the family dentist in Westerville, but for surgery Columbus was visited. At the age of sixty Lucinda purchased false teeth of Dr. Custer, and these fitted badly.

Westerville voted consistently Republican in the years in which

Lucinda and her husband lived in Westerville. As one might expect from a veteran of the Union army and a member of the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic), John Cornell was a Republican. During the campaign of 1888 she sold a log cabin to the Republicans who reconstructed it on a street corner in downtown Westerville. She often made comments about elections in her diaries and was deeply affected by the deaths of Presidents Garfield and McKinley, decorating the outside of her home with black crape.

Westerville was a community with high moral standards in the late nineteenth century, and the Cornell family fitted well into village life, but there were some inconsistencies. While she belonged to a temperance society in Westerville, she and her husband manufactured a small amount of wine for home use. While Otterbein University forbade students to dance or play cards, these activities were sometimes enjoyed in the Cornell household. On one occasion John Cornell was reprimanded by church officials for working on Sunday.

The Cornell diaries permit us to enjoy an intimate view of how one family lived at the end of the nineteenth century. They are like a camera in recording details and trivia. *her daily obs*
give us new understanding of how our
forefathers lived over 100 years ago
The reader appreciates what Lucinda Merriss Cornell did in her daily observations in her diaries. She has enriched our lives by her comments and record.

*Funerals, Weddings
Letter writing Zedana
Chicago exposition etc. Travel.*

II-THE STYLE OF LIFE

Lucinda Merriss Cornell witnessed a revolution in American living during her lifetime. At the time of her birth in 1832 Americans were accustomed to living almost a self-sufficient existence on farms, to outdoor plumbing, to lighting by candle or whale oil, to transportation by horse and steamboat, to clothing often spun and woven at home, and to low standards of education. At the time of her death in 1911 Americans bought most of their food and clothing in stores, traveled by train, street car and automobile, communicated by telephone and telegraph, owned sewing machines vacuum cleaners and ~~farm machinery~~ ^{washing machines}, used gas and electricity, and enjoyed a comprehensive system of public education. All of this had taken place in one life time!

Lucinda witnessed this revolution taking place in Westerville. The village in the late nineteenth century was a quiet peaceful place with Otterbein University as its outstanding feature. In fact, that was the reason for the birth of Westerville. Its population in 1860 was only 1,000, and a third of century later, about 1,500. Poorly lighted, ^{streets (?)} unpaved and lacking a municipal water system, it was typical of scores of other Ohio communities. The threat by Otterbein University in 1903 that it might move to Dayton unless improvements were undertaken resulted in a "revolution." Bond issues made possible a municipal water system, the construction of sewers, the paving of streets, and the building of a municipal electric plant. Gas and telephones, ^{when?} street cars and trains, had already appeared in the village.

III-THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIARIES OF

LUCINDA MERRISS CORNELL FOR WESTERVILLE HISTORY

The diaries of Lucinda Merriss Cornell make an important contribution to Westerville history. While the reader may often wish that she had commented more fully on this or that event or person, she does record innumerable events of importance to the community such as the arrival of the first train, the construction of the inter-urban line and the arrival of the first trolley, the blowing up of Corbin's saloon, and the dedication of the Vine Street school.

Her diaries reflect changes in the style of life of the times, with references to the use of gas and sewing machines, automobiles, and telephones.

While Westerville had its own *drafts of editorial work on diaries* 1867, the destruction of the files by fire *on diaries* much of what happened in the village. The *on diaries* this gap.

Genealogists will be thrilled at her attention to births, deaths and marriages. Eventually I hope to prepare lists of these events.

The diaries record faithfully the pattern of life as lived by a family at the end of the nineteenth century. They are interesting to students of family life, as they describe how various illnesses, *interrelations among families* a variety of crises and other problems were dealt with. *crises*

Westerville is fortunate to have such a faithful chronicler of village life for almost half a century. Everyone interested in the history of the community is *indebted* to Lucinda Merris Cornell for *her daily record* ~~writing in her diaries daily.~~