

The John Wornall House Handbook

A Guide for Staff & Volunteers



Updated Summer 2017 by Lena White
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Our Mission

The mission of The Wornall/Majors House Museums is to engage our community by bringing history to life through hands-on, innovative programs and experiences.

The Wornall House has been restored as a representative home to interpret the daily life of a prosperous farm family who migrated from the southern states in the years before the Civil War and settled in western Missouri. The period of interpretation is roughly 1830 to 1865.

The Wornall/Majors House Museums hope that visitors will learn about:

- a) The Wornall family;
- b) The appearance and usage of the Wornall Home and its furnishings;
- c) Characteristics of mid-19th century society through the various aspects of daily life on the American frontier;
- d) Border warfare and the Civil War, and their impact on the area;
- e) Slavery in a border state

It is the hope that visitors will leave the home with a better understanding of the following concepts:

- a) Each age fashions its material world by its own ideas of beauty; furniture, clothing, décor and architecture all reflect that culture.
- b) The basic needs of people in every age are similar; this house represents a way of life characteristic of the period 1830-1865.
- c) A pioneer farm family's life was difficult and full of uncertainties.
- d) Slavery in western Missouri was very profitable, but did not operate on a plantation scale. While slaveholders typically worked alongside their slaves, this version of slavery was by no means "better" or more acceptable to enslaved people.
- e) The Civil War was a major and devastating event in western Missouri.
- f) The way we think, believe or feel about certain issues today has been influenced by the way historical people thought, believed or felt about similar issues.

To achieve these goals, remember that people are interested in people. Guides can bring the house and its rooms alive by helping visitors answer these four questions:

- a) What is this room?
- b) Who would have been here?
- c) What did they do in this room?
- d) How did they use the things in the room?

Each interpreter may add anecdotes and details about the house and the family as they see fit. Keep in mind the main objective is that all visitors leave with the same basic understanding: why the house survived the Civil War and why it was preserved as a museum.

TOUR RULES & GUIDELINES

Please go over #1 at the beginning of ALL tours.

1. **NO TOUCHING:** Because the Wornall House is furnished with period antiques, visitors are asked to refrain from touching or sitting on any furniture and from handling any artifacts.
2. **FOOD & DRINK:** Visitors may not bring food or drink into the house museum. Water bottles are allowed, as long as they have a lid and remain closed.
3. **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Photography is welcome inside the museum; visitors are asked to limit their use of flash, especially near paper and fabrics.
4. **ACCESSIBILITY:** Folding chairs are supplied behind the main doors in most rooms to accommodate those who would like to sit; under no circumstances may any guest or volunteer sit on the antique furniture on display. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a photographic guide to the upstairs rooms of the home is available in the Front Hallway for those unable to navigate the stairs. Service animals are allowed; no other animals are permitted in the museum.
5. **RESTROOMS:** A public restroom is available for visitors; it is located next to the main kitchen door and is unlocked during tour hours. Staff and volunteers have access to the key.
6. **SUPERVISION POLICY:** All children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Wornall House Background

Useful starting points, fun facts, and brief anecdotes

Core Facts:

- Completed in 1858, the house is a Greek revival style that was popular in the antebellum South.
- The original boundaries of the Wornall family farm were approximately: 59th street on the North, 67th street on the South, Brookside Boulevard on the East, and State Line on the West.
- Wornall Road existed when the house was built; back then, it was an unpaved country lane that fed into the larger Santa Fe trail system. It was officially named for John Wornall during his lifetime.
- Size:
 - The house is approximately 3,850 square feet in size;
 - both the interior and exterior walls are 12” thick;
 - its ceilings are 11’ high.
- While the exact cost of this house is unknown, similar houses were built in Missouri at this time for around \$4,500.
 - The Wornall farm sustained serious damage during the Civil War era, including \$2,800 worth caused by Union Colonel Doc Jennison (Seventh Kansas Calvary) and about 200 of his men. (See below for more details.)
- Materials:
 - The house’s signature red bricks were fired on site from local clay; the mortar between them is made of Missouri River sand.
 - The foundation, door, and window lintels are all made of limestone that was quarried on the property. Except for the ornamental brick fireplace in the parlor, the rest of the fireplaces are also made of limestone.
 - The second story floorboards are original to the house and are made of white pine.

The Property:

- The original wood-framed house was located about 200 feet to the north of the new home; later, it was moved to the west side of Wornall Road.
 - After the Wornall family moved into their newly constructed home in 1858, the old cabin was likely used as slave quarters or to house hired hands. After the Civil War, African American servants and field hands hired by the Wornall family lived in the cabin.
- The Wornalls’ barn stood near what is now 63rd street and Brookside Boulevard, about where CVS pharmacy is today. Stables for horses were located closer to the house on the southeast side, and Eliza Wornall’s original vegetable garden was located to the south of the main house. The exact location of other outbuildings is unknown.
- Very few structural changes were made to the house during 100 years of family residence. In the 1880s, a door was cut between the dining room and kitchen, where before there had been only a pass-through.
- When Roma Wornall returned to the house in 1911, she initiated a major renovation. During this time, plumbing, electricity, and gas were added; the open galleries were glassed in as sun porches; and hardwood floors were placed over the pine.
 - Since all of the Wornall House’s walls are load-bearing, plumbing could only be added to the rear of the house. The original pantry (attached to the kitchen) and a tiny upstairs room designated as servants’ quarters were converted to bathrooms.

- At this point, the door between the Master Bedroom and the Strangers' Rooms was added so that family members sleeping in the front bedrooms could easily access the new bathroom.
- The “H” marker on the front of the house was placed in 1923 and designates the house as one of Kansas City’s historic landmarks.

Quick History:

- Though they lived in the house for most of the Civil War, the Wornall family would briefly leave the farm after Union General Thomas Ewing issued Order #11 in August 1863. They returned to the farm in the Spring of 1864.
- Because of its location, John Wornall’s homestead was a frequent target for Missouri “Bushwhackers” (pro-Confederate guerrillas) and Kansas “Jayhawkers” (abolitionist vigilantes).
 - Around 1861, Union Colonel Doc Jennison of the Seventh Kansas Calvary used the house as his headquarters, while about 200 men under his control occupied the land for eight days tearing down fences, killing livestock and destroying crops. Jennison, an ardent and notoriously uncompromising abolitionist, apparently found little evidence of Confederate sympathies was satisfied with John’s loyalty to the Union.
 - Surprisingly, Jennison compensated John Wornall for the \$2,800 of damage he and his men had done to the farm when he departed; this was very unusual.
 - In later years, the Wornalls credited the family’s survival of this ordeal to the gracious hospitality demonstrated by Eliza.
- The house was used as a field hospital by both Confederate and Union regiments during the Battle of Westport in October 1864. (For more details, see “The Battle of Westport.”)
- John and Eliza left the house in January of 1865 after threats were made against the family by suspected bushwhackers; they moved to a home in downtown Kansas City, where Eliza died that summer. John and his last wife, Roma, were married in the house but did not return to live at the farm full-time until 1874.
- Members of the family lived in the house (almost) continuously for over 100 years.
 - The house was sold to local real estate developer J. C. Nichols in 1909. However, Roma Wornall exercised an option to repurchase the property and brought it back into family ownership after two years.
 - Roma chose to move back to the house because it was announced that electricity, gas, and water/sewer systems were about to be built out to what is now the Wornall Homestead neighborhood. Had she not been able to access these modern conveniences, she likely would have remained downtown.
 - Mrs. A. Ross Hill operated a day school for boys in the house for a time while it was owned by J.C. Nichols; this was the beginning of the Pembroke Hill Country Day School.
- Wornall descendants lived in the home until it was sold to the Jackson County Historical Society in 1964. The Society restored the home over an eight-year period, and the John Wornall House Museum opened in 1972.
 - During the restoration process (approx.. 1964-1972) the house was restored to its original 1858 appearance as much as possible, allowing for necessary 20th century conventions such as bathrooms, central heating, and electricity.
 - According to descendent Jim Wornall, who lived in the house as a child and teenager, the old homestead was used as a “starter” home for younger couples in the family as they saved to purchase their first homes.
- The John Wornall House Museum became a self-standing non-profit organization in the 1990s, and merged with the Alexander Majors House Museum in 2011.

Wornall Family History

- John Bristow Wornall came to Jackson County, MO, with his family (father Richard, mother Judith, and brother George Thomas) in 1843. They came from Shelbyville, KY, after Richard's trading business failed.
 - Family records indicate that the Wornalls sold off virtually all of their property, down to their kitchen implements, to pay off the family's debts before they left Kentucky. This sale included 13 enslaved people.
- Richard and Judith Wornall purchased their first 500 acres from John C. McCoy, the founder of Westport.
 - They paid \$5 per acre for the land, which included a small wooden house built in 1837 and a female slave. The original property stretched from present-day 59th to 67th streets, and from Brookside Boulevard (which was a small stream at that time) to State Line.
- The Wornalls were farmers who grew corn, hay, oats, and wheat and sold horses and mules to people moving west. Records show that the Wornalls made enough money in their first year to pay off the farm entirely.
- In 1845, Richard and Judith sold the farm to their sons (John and George) for \$1,500. In 1849, George caught "gold rush fever," and set out for California, but died of cholera during the journey. Judith also passed away that same year, and Richard returned to Kentucky, where he remarried. The Wornall farm became John's sole property.
- John Wornall was married three times.
 - The first marriage was in 1850 to Matilda Polk from Kentucky. Matilda died childless in 1851 after one year of marriage.
 - In 1854 John married Eliza Shalcross Johnson. Eliza was the 17-year-old daughter of the Reverend Thomas Johnson, founder of the Shawnee Indian Mission in Kansas.
 - John and Eliza had seven children, of which only two sons, Frank (the eldest) and Thomas (the youngest) survived. Their five daughters all passed away before the age of three.
 - Eliza died in July 1865 due to medical complications just a week after giving birth to Thomas (T.J.). Her death came six months after her father, Rev. Johnson, was murdered by Bushwhackers the farm he had purchased at what is now 35th and Agnes streets in Kansas City, MO.
 - John married for the third time in 1866 to Roma Johnson, Eliza's first cousin, who had come to stay with the family to assist with the T.J.'s birth.
 - John and Roma had three sons, of which only two - John Jr. and Charles Hardin - survived.
- Aside from farming, John Wornall became involved in real estate, banking, religion, and politics. He helped to found Kansas City National Bank and Westport Baptist Church, and was a trustee for William Jewel College (a Baptist affiliated college in Liberty, MO). He also served one term as a Missouri state senator, from 1870-1874.
- John Wornall died in 1892; Roma Wornall lived until 1933.

Slavery in the Border States

The realities of slavery in Union states like Missouri are often poorly understood; use these facts to help visitors reconstruct the lives of enslaved people during the Border Wars.

- The Wornalls were slave owners. Four individuals are listed at the Wornall farm in the slave schedule of the 1860 census: two women, one man, and a female child. The original purchase of their land in Missouri included a female slave; she may have been one of the women counted in 1860.
- After the “big house” was completed, the Wornalls most likely used the small wooden house that was included with the purchase of their farm as slave quarters; slaves would not have lived in the main house.
- While slavery in western Missouri was very profitable, it did not exist on the plantation scale characteristic of the antebellum Deep South. While slaveholders were more likely to work alongside their slaves, this was by no means a “less cruel” or more acceptable model for enslaved people. In some ways, the intimacy of this form of slavery meant that “masters” could exercise even greater control over the personal lives of their slaves, and made enslaved people vulnerable to different types of abuse.
 - Slaveholders in Border States like Missouri and Kentucky normally did not own more than 10 individuals; often, their slaves were members of the same family.
 - Because of the small scale of slave holdings, “abroad marriages” were more common among slaves in the Border States. In an abroad marriage, an enslaved husband and wife belonged to different people and lived separately; husbands were granted written permission to travel and visit their families on certain days.
- The migration of slaveholding families like the Wornalls had a serious impact on enslaved individuals and families; emigration meant that people were often sold and were forcibly separated from their home communities.
- Because people on the frontier typically had to be multi-skilled, it was also more common for enslaved people to be trained as master craftspeople (i.e.: blacksmiths, stonemasons, brick makers, etc.) in Missouri.
- “Hiring out” was a very common arrangement in the Border States; people would rent slave labor as needed, rather than making the costly investment of owning, feeding, and housing a slave.
 - John Wornall probably “hired” at least a few slaves to build his house using this system.
- The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 banned slavery in the rebelling Confederate states, but allowed the practice to continue in Union states like Missouri. Nevertheless, John Wornall began to pay his former slaves a wage (the amount of which is unknown) for their labor.
 - It’s not clear why he did this; he may have been trying to preserve the lifestyle he was accustomed to, or he may have predicted slavery’s collapse.
 - Frank Wornall recalled that this went on for a while, until one Sunday morning John and Eliza awoke for church and discovered that the slaves had deserted in the middle of the night - having been paid the day before. Their fate is unknown.

Name	Sex	Age	Race	Other
J. A. Wornall	f	46	B	1
	f	42	B	
	m	28	B	
	f	3	B	

Slave Schedule, US Census, 1860. Only the sex, age, and race of enslaved people was recorded in the national census.

The Battle of Westport

The Battle of Westport was a critical moment in the history of the Wornall House. Use these facts to help visitors understand the scale of the battle, the Wornalls' experience of it, and its historical significance.

- The Kansas-Missouri Border was a violent region throughout the Civil War Era; brutal raids, guerilla warfare, and destruction of property were all common.
- As the situation of the Confederacy grew increasingly dire, General Sterling Price brought 12,000 men from Arkansas and began a series of raids throughout Missouri in the Fall of 1864.
 - During the Missouri Campaign Price and some of his men amassed what was described as a wagon train of looted plunder that they were able to bring back to Arkansas after their defeat.
- Union General Samuel Curtis responded by sending troops east from the Kansas border to intercept Price, and the two armies engaged in numerous skirmishes from October 19th - 22nd.
- By October 23rd, Price and his men were becoming trapped as Union cavalry pursued them from the east. He decided to attack Curtis's troops, who were gathered just South of Westport.
- The Union was stalled near Brush Creek until a local farmer, George Thoman, offered some unexpected help. Thoman's horse had been stolen by Confederate forces; seeking revenge, he informed Union soldiers of a passage or shortcut that would allow them to outflank Price's men. This allowed Union forces to push the Confederate line as far south as the Wornall property.
- Throughout the battle, the Wornall House was occupied as a field hospital; until around midday, a Confederate regiment held the house. When the Union pushed south, the Confederates evacuated the men that they could and retreated; those left behind became prisoners of war. When Union forces arrived at the house, they swiftly began treating their own casualties there.
 - The Confederate soldiers who were unable to evacuate were taken prisoners of war. Union officers prevented their men from executing the wounded Confederates; however, they would not have been given priority medical treatment and many of them likely perished.

Quick Facts

Date: Sunday, October 23rd, 1864

Location: Jackson County, Missouri - most of the heaviest fighting took place around Brush Creek and what is now Jacob L. Loose Park.

Key Commanders: General Samuel Curtis (Union) & General Sterling Price (Confederate)

Number of Participants: 22,000 Union troops and 8,500 Confederate troops; over 30,000 men in total

Objective(s): General Curtis's mission was to keep Westport and Kansas City from falling under the control of the Confederate Army; General Price's forces had been engaged in a protracted rampage throughout Missouri, in an attempt to both recruit men for his cause and to distract Union troops from the war in the East.

Casualties: approximately 1,500 from each side killed, captured, or wounded; about 10% of participants

Early in the battle, John Wornall was conscripted into a Union regiment. He talked his way out of actually fighting by claiming he was too old and did not have a gun, but was unable to return home when the battle began. He watched the progress of the battle from the roof of a Westport hotel, knowing that his family was trapped at the house and unable to communicate with them in any way.

Room By Room

Each room of the Wornall House has a story; use this guide to help visitors interpret our collection.

The Front Entruway

Use this space to welcome visitors to the house and to talk about it's history, construction, and restoration.

- The front doorway with the sidelights and the overhead windows take advantage of natural light, keeping the interior hall from being dark and gloomy.
- The slight inward sloping door and window frames are topped with a slight pediment, a type of molding known as “Greek ears.” This technique is also a small optical illusion - it makes the ceilings seem even higher.
- Visitors to the home would have been greeted here. The hallway was a mediating space from which visitors would either be escorted into the formal parlor, into the sitting room, or even through the opposite door.
 - The lady of the house would have “at home” days when she would receive visitors. Other days she would go out to visit others.
 - It was the custom to visit between 3-5 p.m. and appropriate to stay for about 30 minutes. Since it was considered rude to be caught looking at a watch or clock, one must develop a good sense of timing.
 - When guests arrived at the Wornall house, they might have placed their calling card on a tray, usually located on a hall tree or hallstand. Calling cards were used as a means of identification as well as a way of leaving a message without a face to face visit.
- The hallstand dates from about 1855 and displays a typical gentleman’s top hat from the period; it has a small hole in the top to allow for ventilation.

Domestic Spaces: Public vs. Private

The organization of interior space changed in the early 19th century. Early colonial homes typically had only one large room where the family lived, ate, worked, and slept. As American society became increasingly individualized and less collective, however, the division between public and private spaces solidified.

By 1840, the “specialization” of interior architecture was standard in the United States, with separate spaces for work, recreation, dining, and sleep. The front hallway was a transitional zone that physically separated visitors - representatives of the “outside world” - from the day-to-day activities of the household. To enforce this separation, the doors leading to the sitting room and parlor would have been kept closed.

The Parlor

In this room, introduce visitors to 19th century etiquette and Victorian culture & customs. Discuss the differences between public & private spaces in the house; introduce the Wornall family.

- In the 19th century, having a parlor was sometimes considered controversial; opponents criticized the room as a useless extravagance. Considered a demonstration of wealth and refinement (as evidenced by the painted walls, furnishings, piano, and portraits) the parlor was an adults-only space reserved for special occasions.
 - Formal uses included Christmas celebrations, weddings, or funerals; however, the parlor could also be used by the farmer for business meetings, or by his wife and adult children for other social rituals (courtship, social gatherings, religious gatherings, etc.)
 - Slaves would have entered the Parlor only to clean it; the “lady of the house” (Mrs. Wornall) would have been responsible for all serving in this room.
- The pale grey walls are elegant, and the fact that the walls are painted rather than wallpapered shows that the Wornalls were wealthy. Wallpaper was used to hide cracks and imperfections; by painting certain rooms, the homeowners were subtly advertising the solid construction of their house.
- The condition of the fireplace is an indication that this room was not used very often; though it is soot-stained, the red brick is still visible. A brick firebox was considered more attractive, but didn’t wear as well as the limestone found in other Wornall House fireplaces.
 - The carved mantel on this fireplace was salvaged from the farmhouse purchased by Eliza’s father Rev. Johnson, which was located near present-day 35th and Agnes Streets. (Rev. Johnson was murdered by suspected Bushwhackers at that house in January 1865.)
- The woman in the portrait above the mantel is Christiana Polk McCoy. She was the mother of John Calvin McCoy, founder of Westport, from whom the Wornalls purchased their land. She was not related to John Wornall’s first wife, Matilda Polk. Her portrait is on permanent loan from the Jackson County Historical Society. The artist is unknown.
- The three smaller portraits of John, Eliza, and Roma Wornall were originally painted by George Caleb Bingham. The portraits of John and Eliza are still in the family, but Roma’s portrait is at the Nelson-Atkins Museum in the Bingham collection.
 - Bingham usually charged \$100-\$150 each for portraits. We have a framed copy of the original receipt for one of the paintings, which shows a cost of \$100. To have portraits painted was truly an extravagance at a time when the average laborer made between \$.50-\$1.00 per day.
- **Original Wornall Items:**
 - The green chairs and sofa were owned by Roma Wornall after the Civil War.
 - The chair without arms is sometimes referred to as a lady’s chair. A popular myth claims that these kinds of chairs were armless due to the wide hoop skirts worn by women during this period. In fact, armchairs were an indication of status, and were often reserved for the head of the household or important guests.
 - The piano is a “square” or “boxed” Grand Steinway from 1867. It is an original Wornall family piece. It was fully restored in 1987.
 - It is unusual because it has only seven octaves, rather than the usual eight. There is also a mechanism underneath it that makes music played on the keys sound like a harp.
 - One of the Wornall family’s bibles is also on display in this room. This is an important document in our collection, because the Wornalls used their Bible to record detailed information about births, deaths, and marriages in the family. Visitors can inspect relevant pages from the Bible more closely using the laminated scans on the table.
 - The bible includes several family photographs as well, including images of John Wornall’s father, a young Frank Wornall, and the photograph that George Caleb Bingham based Eliza Wornall’s posthumous portrait on.

The Sitting Room

Use this room to illustrate family life in the 1850s, to discuss the Wornall family further, and to explore the topic of slavery more fully.

- The sitting room was the center of family life, similar to the modern living room. It has a more relaxed, warmer atmosphere than the parlor and would have been where the family spent most of their free time, gathering in the evenings after the work day was done. Children would play or work on their lessons, mothers would sew or read from women's magazines, and fathers would write letters, work on homestead accounting, or perhaps read to the family from the Bible or from popular authors.
- The furnishings in this room are heavier and more durable than in the parlor. The brick red color is cheerful and easier to care for. The large limestone block fireplace and wood box indicates that this was the major source of heat. The small bellows on the fireplace encouraged a slow fire, perfect for heating the room for hours at a time.
- Although candles were still the main source of light, the family's best lamp would have been placed in this room to provide a main source of light.
 - The astral lamp on the table was fueled by whale oil or kerosene. Astral lamps were popular, as they elevated the flames and eliminated shadows.
- The long Empire sofa and other pieces are upholstered with horsehair cloth. The material was woven using horse hair and cotton, and would have been cheaper and more readily available than pieces covered with imported cloth. Horsehair had the advantage of looking expensive while being very durable.
 - There is a touchable sample of horsehair cloth in the basket on the sofa; encourage guests to feel it.
- The tall clock in the corner of the room carries the name of Silas Hoadley, a clockmaker from Plymouth, Connecticut, and was made in 1823. As brass was expensive, the inside mechanisms were made of wood. Hoadley sold the works and the beautiful painted face for about \$15.00. These parts would be shipped out to a local cabinet maker to be built and to add the case. This particular case is made of cherry wood. The clock is in exceptional condition and still works.
- The framed engraving above the sofa is a reproduction of George Caleb Bingham's painting "The Jolly Flatboatmen" (1846).

Interpreting Slavery at the Wornall House

This room can be a natural place on the tour to talk to visitors about the enslaved residents of the Wornall Homestead. (For general information about interpreting slavery on tours, see "Slavery in the Border States.")

Docents are encouraged to make use of the panel on display titled "Slavery and Freedom on the Wornall Homestead." Directly to the left of the panel, on the secretary, is a 15-pound iron ball with a shackle. While this artifact came from a farm near Liberty, MO, rather than the Wornall House, it is the type of instrument used by slaveholders in Western Missouri - people that the Wornalls would have considered their contemporaries - to control enslaved people as the system of slavery broke down.

The 1844 map is also useful in making connections on this topic. Discuss the similarities between early Missouri and the Wornalls' home state of Kentucky; both states were "Border States" between North and South, had economies based on diversified agriculture, and were states where slavery was legal, but not practiced on the plantation scale of the Deep South. If you have questions or concerns about how to interpret slavery at the Wornall House for visitors, you are welcome to schedule one-on-one coaching with the volunteer coordinator.

- The United States map in the lighted case is from 1844, the year after the Wornall family came to Westport. Notice how much of the United States was still unsettled.
 - The Wornalls' original property stretched to State Line; Kansas did not become a state until January 1861. The Wornalls literally moved to the edge of the U.S.
 - Also note that on this pre-Civil War map:
 - there is only one Virginia (West Virginia would secede from Virginia to remain part of the Union in 1863)
 - Florida was still just a territory
 - Texas was its own country (it would join the U. S. as a state in 1845)
- On the side table beneath the window are some examples of games from the Civil War era:
 - The Game of Life was one of the first board games produced by The Milton Bradley Company, which was founded in Massachusetts in 1860. The red and black checkered board game is a reproduction of one of the earliest copies.
 - Board games like this one would have been played with spinners instead of dice. Dice were strongly associated with gambling during this time, which most Evangelical Protestants rejected as sinful. The Wornalls, as Southern Baptists, likely shared similar beliefs.
 - The cribbage set (which no longer has its pieces) originally belonged to John Wornall.
- On the wall is an 1861 U.S. Springfield rifle, a gun commonly issued to Union soldiers during the Civil War. Unlike modern firearms, Springfields were non-repeating; the gun had to be reloaded each time it was fired. A particularly skilled soldier might have been able to load and fire the rifle up to four times in one minute.
- Under the rifle is a child's desk. Note the McGuffey reader. From the mid-1800s until the mid-1900s this was the most common set of grade school primer books. The desk is perhaps slightly out of place in this room, because the Wornall children were primarily educated outside the home. In his memoirs, Frank Wornall reported that he had attended 13 different schools, including college.
- On the mantel of the fireplace is a glass holder with "spills" – rolled up pieces of newspaper or wood shavings – which were used to light candles, rather than wasting expensive, store-bought matches. Rolling spills was probably one of the first simple chores that young children would have been assigned as members of the household.
- The mantel clock, made in 1842 by Oliver Weldon, has a reverse painting on its glass door.
- On the table is a bound copy of *Godey's Lady's Book*. This magazine was published monthly in Philadelphia and had a large readership throughout the nation. Unlike its contemporary, *Harper's Weekly*, *Godey's* avoided covering politics or other sensitive topics; in fact, its editors scrupulously avoided any acknowledgement of the Civil War, even as it impacted the lives of their readers. Instead, it contained poetry, articles, and engravings by well-known artists.
 - Since mail service throughout the United States was not always reliable, it was common for publishers to compile a year's worth of magazines like *Harper's* and *Godey's* into a bound book for sale; that way, people would only have to purchase the magazine once.
- The silver pitcher in the secretary was a trophy won by John Wornall in a cattle-raising competition.
- The saber on the window seat below them is from about 1860; it is typical of the swords carried by officers in both the Union and Confederate armies.

The Dining Room

In this room, talk about the Civil War, the Battle of Westport, and/or General Order #11.

- The formal dining room was a versatile space; special feasts and everyday meals would have both been served here.
- Notice that this room, unlike the other rooms of the house, does not have a traditional fireplace for heat. Instead, this room was heated with a coal burning stove. The stove is another indication of the Wornalls' prosperity, and another status symbol they built into their home. Coal was an expensive fuel at this time, but to the Wornalls it would have seemed very modern and very clean to heat their dining area with a coal stove rather than a dirty, ashy fireplace.
 - The stove on display here is not original to the house, but is the same model as the one John Wornall purchased for his home. The original stove cost \$9 new.
- There was no interior doorway connecting the Dining Room and Kitchen in 1858. The "pass through" in the china cabinet was used to serve food from the kitchen and to return dirty dishes. The Dining Room was kept separate from the Kitchen to limit the pollution of the cooking fire in the other rooms of the house. While poorer families lived in small, crowded homes filled with the heat, smoke, and smells of the cooking fire, the Wornalls would have found their arrangement much more refined.
 - The 2' thick wall between the Dining Room and Kitchen would have also reduced the transfer of heat from the kitchen to the other rooms and reduced the risk of fire.
 - The detached kitchen or "summer kitchen" was common in Southern states like the Wornalls' native Kentucky, so this separation would have seemed normal to them.
- The furniture is mahogany and of Empire design. John Wornall would have sat in the chair in front of the stove rather than at the head of the table. From this seat, he could see out the sitting room window and the dining room windows, and would be immediately aware if anyone were approaching the house.
- The sugar chest under the south window is made of cherry wood. Refined sugar was fairly expensive - about \$.04 a pound in 1861 - so it was kept locked up and measured out carefully to prevent waste and to keep insects out. Most meals would have been sweetened with honey or molasses, and white sugar would have been used for special occasions or holidays.
- During the Wornall House's brief stint as a field hospital during the Battle of Westport, this room was used as an operating room by surgeons to treat the most seriously injured soldiers.
 - The surgeon's kits on the tables beneath the windows contain tools like those used by army doctors to treat the wounded during the Battle of Westport, including a bone saw, a bullet probe, sutures, scalpels, and various forceps and other equipment.
 - The bottles on the North window sill are replicas of the kinds of medicines that were available during the 1850s and '60s, though they would not all have been available to doctors on the front lines. These medicines include laudanum, a powerful opiate and sedative, and quinine, which was used to treat malaria.
 - The cannon balls and bullets on display are relics of the Battle of Westport, excavated either on the property or nearby.

- There are two prints of paintings by George Caleb Bingham on the wall:
 - On the left is “General Order No. 11” (1863). Bingham painted this propaganda piece to express sympathy for the suffering of the people affected by the order.
 - The Wornalls were among those affected by Order No. 11, though their considerable wealth protected them from some of the losses experienced by their poorer neighbors. John and Eliza left their farm when the order was issued to stay at a rented home in downtown Kansas City, but returned by the Spring of 1864.
 - The print on the right is called “The County Election” (1852). The scene depicted is quite chaotic, with much drinking taking place. Notice the absence of women and people of color; the festivities of an election day would have been reserved for those with the right to vote.
 - During this time, elections were celebratory and patriotic affairs; they were an opportunity for white men of various social classes to affirm the bonds of their mutual citizenship and to celebrate their rights.
 - Within Bingham’s painting, though, a very clear hierarchy can be observed among this homogenous crowd. Certain men, wearing distinctive markers of their social class, are located much closer to the seat of power - the ballot box - than others.

General Order No. 11

General Order No. 11 was issued in August 1863 by Brigadier General Thomas Ewing, who was commander of Union forces on the Missouri-Kansas border. Ewing and other military leaders were frustrated with the chaos of the Border Wars, and were infuriated with Missouri farmers who provided aid to Confederate-sympathizing “Bushwhackers.” Partially in response to the Lawrence Massacre of 1863, Ewing ordered civilians in the four Missouri counties along the state line to abandon their homes and evacuate the area. They were given fifteen days to comply with the order.

Order No. 11 also demanded that farmers surrender their crops to the Army within the designated evacuation period; all crops found in the area after that time were to be destroyed.

Upon encountering abandoned homesteads, Union troops burned crops, sold or destroyed livestock, and burned homes. Over 11,000 people were displaced, and the destruction of their property made it difficult for them to return to civilian life and recover economically after the end of the war. While the order was intended to deprive guerilla fighters of resources, historians believe that it actually had the opposite effect - abandoned farms were easy targets for guerillas.

Order No. 11 also engendered bitter feelings among the people it affected; the memory of this harsh treatment endured for generations in Missouri, and may have actually helped to perpetuate the “Lost Cause” Confederate mythology that emerged after the Civil War.

The Kitchen

In this room, talk about 19th century culinary techniques and kitchen technology. Call attention to the many kitchen implements and their uses. Discuss the roles of different people in the household: adult women, children, slaves, etc.

- The wall between the dining room and kitchen is 24” thick; this kept the heat and smells of open-hearth cooking from overwhelming the rest of the house.
 - While today we associate the smell of “home cooking” with authenticity and comfort, upper-class people in the 1850s would have considered the smoke and smells of a cooking fire unseemly in a fancy house like this one.
- The kitchen was the center of activity for the household. Outside the kitchen door would have been the icehouse, smokehouse, chicken yard and a well (located in the neighbor’s back yard today).
- Kitchens were usually the least decorated room in 19th century homes. They would have been considered practical workspaces first and foremost – they needed to be organized, clean, and durable.
- The Wornalls originally practiced open hearth cooking. Most of the cooking was done on the brick hearth using a variety of cast iron pots. Initially a large fire would be built, then the coals would be raked out on to the hearthstone for cooking.
 - Eliza Wornall would have been in charge of running the kitchen when the family first moved into the house, but she would certainly have had the help of the family’s slaves to do the most difficult, dirty, and time-consuming tasks (i.e.: fetching and hauling water, tending the fire, cleanup, etc.).
 - Even though the family was wealthy, the realities of frontier life meant that everyone in the household had to work. While the Wornall family did own slaves, their lifestyles would not have been entirely subsidized by enslaved people’s work. All labor organized on the farm, however, would have conformed to the racial hierarchy of slavery.

Eliza Wornall’s Battle of Westport

Eliza Wornall spent most of the Battle of Westport in her kitchen, cooking for the armies that occupied her home. By late 1864, the family’s slaves had escaped, so she would not have had the kitchen help she was accustomed to. She was about three months pregnant at the time.

At one point, Eliza nearly caught a cannonball when she left the kitchen to fetch a ham from the smokehouse. In his memoirs, her son Frank claimed that it passed so close to her head that it blew down her pinned-up hairstyle – but that she soon left the house again to finish her errand.

John Wornall was not at the house during the Battle; he was trapped behind Union lines in Westport, unable to reach his house or communicate with his family.

The Hearth

- The crane, crane sockets, and trammel are for adjusting the height of pots; these, and most of the utensils, were made of iron. The crane swivels above the fire so that one could hang a pot over it to boil a stew or soup, or simply to heat water.
- The Dutch oven has three short legs on the bottom and a lid with a lip around it so that coals could be placed below and on top for even heating all around. It could be used for several things; most of the baking would be done in this pan.
- The tin reflector oven was used to roast meats or for baking.
- The small spiders or trivets allowed one to place a pot or pan over warm coals to warm or fry food

- The “toe toaster” is located on the hearth. A slice of bread would be placed in the slot and turned towards the fire. Once that side was toasted, one could use a toe to swivel it to the other side.
- The iron tools next to the fireplace are referred to as “third hands.” The “S” shaped hooks would be used to lift hot pot lids or pots from the hearth.
- There are several items of interest on the mantle. The glass jar is a fly catcher. Honey or molasses would be put in the bottom to attract and catch flies. A child (or someone with small hands) would then have to scrape out the sticky dead bugs.
- Several flat irons would have been owned by the family for pressing clothes. The fluting iron was for putting ruffled edges on petticoats, sleeves and collars.

The Table

- Notice the different items on the table. These items include a cherry pitter, an apple corer, butter molds and a wooden bread bowl.
- The spice box has individual containers for spices that could be purchased locally in Westport. Herbs would have been grown on the farm in the herb garden.
- The blue wrapped cones contain sugar. Because it was in compact cone form, sugar nippers were used to cut off a small piece, which was then ground into an appropriate consistency for baking using a mortar and pestle. The blue or purple paper that the cones came in was sometimes saved and soaked in water to extract the blue dye for use in small crafts or handiworks.
- Loose leaf teas were popular during the middle 1800s. They were a bit more expensive than coffee, so only wealthy families like the Wornalls could afford a variety of teas. For everyday use, however, herbal teas were common.
- There was no running water when the house was first built; buckets of water were carried from the well or cistern and placed on the water bench below the window.
- The dry sink next to the hearth was used in addition to the kitchen table for food preparation. The pans in it would hold water for different purposes. Lined with tin, it provided a large enclosed work space - but since there was no drain, dirty water also had to be carried out.
- The wire, cage-like item on the bench beneath the north-facing window is a rat trap.
- Notice the candle molds on the shelves. Although there are receipts in the family papers for the purchase of candles, “everyday” candles were probably made at home.
- The caned bottomed, Shaker-style rocking chair dates to about 1800. These kinds of chairs are sometimes called “hoopskirt rockers,” because the design allowed a woman to hike up her hoopskirt and rest it on the edge. This chair originally belonged to the family of U.S. President Calvin Coolidge.
- Underneath the rocking chair is the trap door that leads to the root cellar. Perishable foods would have been stored down there, taking advantage of the natural refrigeration of limestone.
 - This cellar may have provided shelter for Eliza Wornall and her son Frank during the Battle of Westport - he states that they “hid out” in the house during the worst of the fighting.
- Food preservation during this time was difficult. Most food was eaten seasonally - if one desired fruits or vegetables in the colder months, they would have to be dried and stored after the harvest. To make them edible, dried vegetables were stewed to soften and rehydrate them.
 - Canning technology made a major leap forward in 1858, and mason jars made preserving foods much easier.
- The machine by the door is for making beaten biscuits - a Southern “delicacy.” Made from flour, lard, salt and water, no leavening is used. The dough is supposed to be “beaten” until it is, as one recipe says, “smooth as baby’s bottom.” When baked, the biscuits were like crackers or hardtack, and could be stored in airtight containers for several months.

The Upstairs Hallway

- When soldiers first arrived to occupy the house, one of the first things they did was tear out the original bannister and railings on the staircase. They did this because the corners of the staircase were too narrow to maneuver a man on a stretcher. The staircase remained open throughout the battle.
 - They also removed many of the house's original doors, to be used as makeshift stretchers.
- During the Battle of Westport, soldiers filled every available space in the house, even the upstairs bedrooms and hallway. The rooms and hallway would have been lined with stretchers; this was where the more stable soldiers were sent for recovery.

"The beds were knocked down and practically all our furniture was taken out. Pallets were laid close to each other on the floor and the hospital equipment was brought in remarkably short time. In a few hours the house was full of the wounded and dying." - Frank Wornall

- Note the framed wreath hanging on the wall; like the "memory locket" and bracelet on the table below, it is a mourning item made with human hair. These kinds of crafts were a common Victorian mourning practice, usually created by women from the hair of a recently deceased loved one. In a time when photography was less common, this was a way to hold on to a person's memory after their burial. The wreath is made from the hair of over 50 different individuals from the same family.
- The upstairs floors of the Wornall House are original to the home; they are made of white pine.

John's Close Call

The Wornall homestead was attacked multiple times during the Border Wars (c. 1859 - 1865). In one incident, John Wornall was nearly hung from the South-facing gallery of his own house.

One Sunday in 1863, the Wornall family was stopped on the road as they traveled to Westport for church. The group of men, dressed in Union uniforms, forced them to return home. They ransacked the house, searching for valuables, and demanded money from John. He told the men he didn't have what they were looking for, and offered to take them to the bank in Westport to get his money. The men refused to go into town, which confirmed the family's suspicions that they were Bushwhackers, not Union soldiers.

Exasperated and growing restless, the group prepared to hang John from the second-floor gallery. He had a noose around his neck when a group of soldiers from the Shawnee Indian Mission came to his rescue. The Wornalls' hired field hand, a German man named Hans, had seen the family be stopped and realized that they were in danger; he had ridden to the Mission to raise the alarm.

Frank Wornall wrote in his memoirs that when the real soldiers appeared, "the band making so much trouble quickly took to their horses, leaving dad to disentangle himself from the noose of rope around his neck. A few minutes later in the soldiers' appearance might have made a great difference in our lives."

The Children's Bedroom

Use this room to illustrate Victorian childhood & gender roles; discuss the various toys and their purposes; explain the differences between 19th century and modern childhood.

- Even if all of the Wornall children had survived past toddler-hood, they would have shared this bedroom. Most American parents did not have any privacy at all from their children in the 19th century, and the Wornalls would have seen this arrangement as a major upgrade.
- Children did not typically spend much time relaxing or playing in their bedroom, preferring to spend their free time outdoors. Children also often had chores to do, and were expected to work alongside their parents on the farm. The wealth and privilege of the Wornall family may have delayed the onset of work for their children, and allowed them to pursue their education; however, they would have likely worked on the farm in some capacity.
- Adults in the 19th century were only beginning to understand childhood as a separate, protected stage of a person's development. In practice, children were often expected to take on physical and emotional responsibilities that we might hesitate to impose on them today.
- The main bed is from about 1835 and is a rope bed. Notice that there are rope supports for the mattress; this made the bed more comfortable than one supported by wooden slats.
 - The T-shaped tool next to the bedpost is called a bed key or bed winder. It is used to tighten the ropes when necessary.
 - This suggests the old expression "sleep tight," which is sometimes said to come from the need to pull the ropes tightly for them not to sag. More likely, the term refers to the older English meaning of "tight," which means soundly; ergo, "sleep tight" = "sleep soundly."
 - This mattress is a feather tick, which was highly prized. Mattresses from this period were typically stuffed with straw, corn husks and/or cotton. If a family was well-to-do, they would have had goose down mattresses.
 - The trundle bed beneath could sleep perhaps two or three small children and would easily slide underneath the main bed for storage. Wornall family papers contain a receipt for such a bed - it cost \$8.00.

Frank's Mistake

Childhood on the American frontier was much different than it is today. For children like Frank Wornall (b. 1855), the violence of the Border Wars was an ever-present fact of life.

Frank would have only been seven years old in 1862, when he inadvertently brought the ire of Federal troops down upon his father. One day, young Frank was standing on the second-story balcony with Mittie Pigg, a teenaged orphan girl from Kentucky that John had brought to stay with the family. As a company of Union soldiers passed the house, traveling north on what is now Wornall Road, the girl said: "Frank, I dare you to shout 'Hurrah for Jeff Davis [the president of the Confederacy].'" Frank explained what happened next in his memoirs:

"I was at an age when I wouldn't take a dare, so in a piping voice I shouted. The passing soldiers looked our way but did not stop; however, that night after I had gone to bed and was asleep, a part of the troop returned, and refusing to listen to father's explanation, marched him away with a threat of death."

Eliza had gotten Mittie to confess to what had happened, and John desperately tried to explain Frank's actions as a "childish prank;" he must have been convincing, because the soldiers allowed him to return home that night.

Frank didn't write about the consequences he faced for this; in a time when physical punishment was a common part of childrearing, they couldn't have been pleasant!

- Children would have expected to share their bed with one or more sibling until they left home. Even among unmarried adults, non-romantic, same-sex co-sleeping was a fact of life in the 19th century.
- The smallest bed is for dolls, and was possibly a furniture maker's sample from the mid-1800s. Before photography was widespread, miniature samples would be created so that furnituremakers could display their skill.
 - Notice the doll sized quilt on the bed. Young girls would often learn to sew by making their doll's clothing and bedding.
- 19th century children owned few, if any, toys. The sheer number of Victorian toys on display in this room is the most inaccurate part of the room's interpretation. Fine, craftsman-made, store-bought toys would have been a luxury on the frontier, and would have been unobtainable for most families. The Wornall children may have had one or two store bought toys during their childhoods; for poorer children and enslaved children, all playthings would have been simple and homemade.
 - Toys made by adults for children were also made with very specific, instructional messages in mind. They were often intended to teach children about the responsibilities they would be expected to take on as adults, and mirrored the gendered divisions in labor more generally. Hence, fragile china dolls and teasetts for young girls; blocks, toy animals, and rocking horses for boys.
 - Notice the tiny "Frozen Charlotte" doll on the dresser. These dolls were popularized by the mid-1800s ballad "Fair Charlotte." According to the ballad, Charlotte refused to heed her mother's request to wrap up warmly to go on a sleigh ride, and froze to death during the journey. The moral(s) of the story: the cost of vanity is high, and always listen to your mother!
- Notice the chamber pot, with its crocheted "husher" lid; before modern plumbing, people used chamber pots during the night and emptied them in the outhouse in the morning. The "husher" was meant to minimize the rattle of the lid at nighttime.
- The "mammy's bench" along the wall dates to about 1820. These types of rockers were more common in the Old South, where it was common for one (usually enslaved) woman to be tasked with caring for many small children. This design, with its protective bar, allowed the caregiver to rock one or more children and still have her hands free for sewing or other handwork. In states like Missouri, however, this childcare dynamic was less common.
 - It should be noted that the name of this piece of furniture is derived from an outdated and generally offensive term; under no circumstances should the historical women who may have actually used it be referred to this way.
- The two doors on either side of the bed are not modern closets, but "presses." Presses were usually placed next to a chimney and were shallow and lined with shelves. The idea was that the heat from the fireplace pressed out wrinkles and prevented mildew. Since there were no clothes hangers until 1869, people would use either a wardrobe to store their clothes and linens or place them in a press.
 - A popular myth claims that closets in historic homes are so shallow because of a "closet tax," which counted closets as an extra room in the house. There is no evidence to substantiate this. In reality, people owned many fewer articles of clothing in the 19th century, and generally didn't need the kind of storage space we expect today. Instead, they used wardrobes and dressers to store clothes.
- The wardrobe is an original Wornall family piece. It was a wedding gift to Eliza, John's second wife, from her father Rev. Thomas Johnson. A matching wardrobe is still inside the Shawnee Indian Mission museum in Johnson County, Kansas. The wardrobe has pegs and shelves inside.
 - The ornate top piece was added to the wardrobe in later years by Roma, John's third wife.
- The prints on the wall are from 1853, of French origin and depict the Four Seasons. They are examples of the classic Greek revival style of artistic representation.

The Master Bedroom

Finish tours in this room; provide some summary of the Wornall House's history post-1865; explain the purpose of the Stranger Rooms.

- This room was restored and furnished as a gift from the Kansas City chapter of the Colonial Dames of America. The decorations represent the new things John and Eliza Wornall might have purchased for their home. The master bedroom furniture set was made in 1859.
- The baby's cradle would have been placed near, but not too close to, the fireplace.
 - Children often slept in their parent's bedroom until they were 3 or so, as nursing mothers typically weaned their babies later than they do today. Aside from providing a natural form of birth control, extended breastfeeding ensured an uncontaminated source of nutrients for the child. (The Wornalls daughters that lived past birth all passed away around the ages of 2 and 3, when they might have first encountered tainted food and water.)
 - Also, window screens were not yet invented, despite the necessity of open windows on a summer's night. Until children were old enough to learn to be cautious, they would sleep near their parents.
- The bed warmer would have been used on chilly nights. Coals were taken from the fireplace and placed inside this brass pan to warm the sheets before climbing into bed.
- The rocking chair was originally owned by John Wornall. The style is referred to as a "Lincoln Rocker" because President Abraham Lincoln was said to have favored this design for its excellent lumbar support. According to oral history, John Wornall was over six feet tall, like the President; this was more uncommon in the 19th century.
- The dresser and wash stand set are original family pieces; they were chosen for this home by Roma Wornall in the 1870s; her descendants donated them to the Museum in 2018. Having these pieces on display in the master bedroom is a wonderful tribute to Roma, who played a critical role in the house's preservation.
 - Roma Wornall's sterling silver dresser set was donated to the museum by her great-granddaughter. Notice that the pieces are monogrammed with her initials: RJW.
 - The pieces include a hair oil jar, a jar for face powder, two brushes, mirror, shoe horn, various files and a button hook.
 - The wash stand holds a pitcher and wash bowl; this is where daily grooming activities would have been carried out. Full-body baths were taken once a week to twice a month in ideal circumstances; bathing would have been done in the kitchen, near the house's main heat source.
 - Toothbrushes were commonly made from animal bone and swine bristles. Since a sophisticated understanding of germs was not yet widespread, many families shared one toothbrush among themselves.
 - Tooth powder was made from baking soda, chalk, and a bit of mint oil.
 - The wash stand includes touchable props: reproductions of a 19th century toothbrush, tinned tooth powder, and shaving brush.
- The Hidden Doorway: In 1858, the wall behind the bed was solid, separating the family quarters from the guest space known as "Stranger Rooms". When Roma Wornall returned to the house c. 1911, after buying it back from J.C. Nichols, she had the doorway added so the family could access the new upstairs bathroom at the back of the house.

The “Stranger Rooms”

Incorporate these rooms into interpretations of the Master Bedroom, then invite visitors into the office space to take their payment.

- Originally, the two rooms behind the master bedroom were only accessible by the staircase and gallery on the South side of the house.
 - Victorian standards of etiquette dictated that the family’s living quarters were the most private part of the home; guest quarters were made separate for the comfort of both the residents and their visitors.
- Called “stranger rooms,” their purpose of was to allow certain overnight visitors to have a dignified place to sleep that was separate from the main house and family. Houseguests during this time were not necessarily always close personal acquaintances; however, guests that stayed in these spaces likely came from a similar social background to the Wornall family.
 - For a time, a lawyer boarded with the Wornalls; he probably would have used one of these rooms. After farming fully resumed on the property, some hired field hands might have stayed here.
- The rooms could have served a variety of purposes for the family as well, including serving as bedrooms for their older boys or for quarantining sick children.
- When the house was plumbed, the only two bathrooms in the house were at the southeast corner of the first and second stories; this made the door in the wall of the master bedroom even more important!
- The pineapple border in the first room is a typical Victorian motif; pineapples were often used as a symbol of hospitality or welcome during this period.
- These rooms now serve as Wornall/Majors main administrative offices and the Wornall House’s gift shop.

End of Tour

Tours end in the upstairs office; visitors may exit from the porch. Wrap up each tour with the following:

- Offer membership/donation materials when finishing a tour, especially if visitors are local;
- Process payments (cash or Square);
- Point out the Wornall House gift shop and invite visitors to browse our selection;
- Offer information about upcoming events, programs, etc.;
- Inform visitors that they are welcome to look around the grounds and enjoy the Herb Garden