ABSTRACT

THESIS: The Domestic Economy: A Comparative Study of Gender Ideology and Consumption in 19th Century East Central Indiana

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DATE: May 2020

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The Victorian period in the United States began in 1865 and continued until 1914, during which the United States experienced rapid growth and change that led to new culture, ideology, and larger populations in new cities. This new period led to a perceived dichotomy between rural and urban households and this study uses two families from rural households and two from urban households to examine the differences between them in ideology and consumption. These differences were examined using archaeological, architectural, landscape, and ethnohistorical data from each of the households and centered in feminist theory. By examining artifact density, each of the households appear to consume household goods at a similar rate, though a closer look at ceramic data points to higher urban spending on tableware. Home architecture further supports that urban households were more focused on the social uses of their homes than the rural households. The landscape data revealed a potential Midwestern adaptation of Victorian ideals, urban farmsteads. Both urban households were urban farmsteads, making the landscapes of their properties similar to that of the rural households. Additionally, all four households adhered to the
Victorian ideal of keeping a clean front yard. Overall the data reveals that in the Midwest Victorian ideology and culture was more closely adhered to by urban households and facilitated by women, though there is what appears to be a baseline of rural identity even in urban spaces that allows for households to continue domestic production activities while still maintaining their Victorianism.