

Abstract

Title – Historic Ivy Cliff and Plantation Life in Antebellum-Era Virginia

Program of Study – History

Presentation Type – **Choose one of the following:** Physical Poster

Subtype – **Choose one of the following for poster or oral presentation types:** Textual or Investigative

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Plantation life in the Antebellum South—roughly the early-to-mid 19th century—is steeped in nostalgia and romanticized myth, due, in part, to the Lost Cause rhetoric appropriated following the Civil War. Despite this, with their cultural, social, and economic significance, surviving plantations across Virginia offer a tangible look into the reality of life during this key period of American history. Ivy Cliff, the ancestral home of the Brown family, once operated as a thriving plantation in Bedford County, Virginia. While the Brown family eventually scattered to various parts of the country, their home—and the surviving slave cabin on site—remains a testament to plantation life in Virginia’s tobacco belt during a critical era of American history.

Drawing from family letters, architectural surveys, census records, and other primary source documents, this poster will explore the physical landscape of the plantation as it relates to the property’s architectural and agricultural history. It will also include an assessment of the personal experiences, status, and community involvement of the Brown family, members of which served in the Revolutionary War, held instrumental positions in state politics, and engaged and enriched their community. Finally, the lives of Ivy Cliff’s enslaved population will be studied, ultimately humanizing this marginalized group and highlighting the manner in which they left their mark on the property. Using Ivy Cliff as a case study of plantation life in

Antebellum Virginia, this poster will explore the cultural context, norms, and trends of the period while engaging with local history in a tangible way.