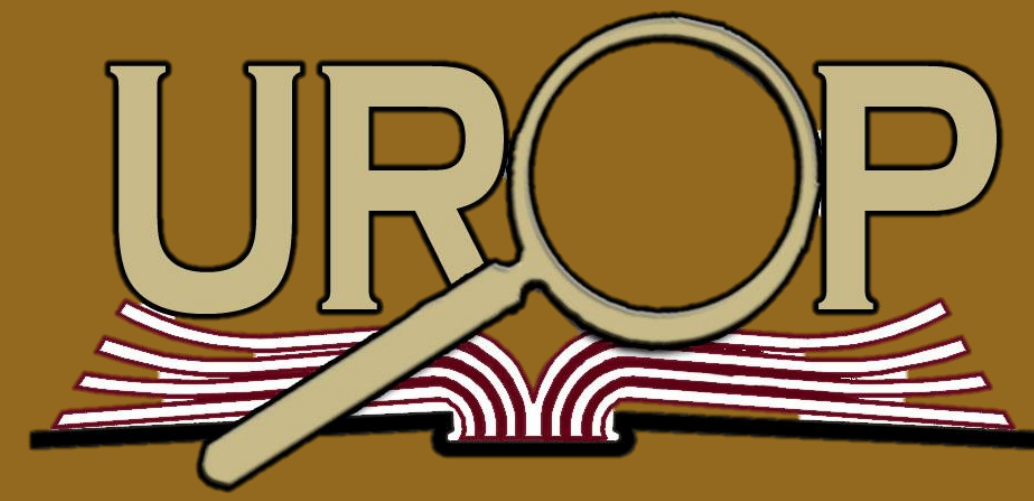


Documentation and Preservation of the Evergreen Plantation Archaeological Survey via Website and Documentary Short Film



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Introduction

Following an excavation of the Evergreen Plantation, led by Dr. Jayur Mehta, I was tasked with creating a website and short documentary film in order to properly document and preserve the various findings during the excavation. Alongside my peers, who worked to catalogue and identify the hundreds of artifacts found on the excavation site, I created visuals that were equal parts stylish and informative to ensure the information would be easily interpreted by all viewers. Likewise, the Evergreen Plantation includes a widely accessible database of those previously enslaved, pushing the research to another level of importance.

For many people, this database is the only record of ancestry available, making the preservation of the lives of those who previously inhabited the plantation incredibly important. Through the documentary and website, we wanted to highlight the importance of preserving this important part of history, and all the incredible cultural developments which came with it.

Background

The Evergreen Plantation, located in Wallace Louisiana, is the largest still-standing plantation in the southern United States.

The Plantation stands today as a privately owned, working sugar cane plantation, and shares the title alongside Gettysburg and



Mount Vernon as a national landmark. Home to twenty-two slave cabins, the plantation has often been used as a film set for such films as "Django Unchained" and "Antebellum". In order to prevent potential damages to the land and it's surrounding areas, as well as preserving the history of the many enslaved persons who lived on the land, Dr. Mehta was tasked with excavating various portions of the plantation, documenting all findings. Said findings have since been logged digitally here at Florida State University.

Methods

Website

Using the Squarespace website builder, I collected information about the plantation through their website and other articles, as well as information about the excavation by reviewing grant proposals, video footage, and documents of the physical findings. I worked alongside Dr. Mehta to integrate the documentary and additional resources onto the website as well.

Documentary

By collecting footage which was taken while on the excavation, as well as collecting footage on my own such as interviews with Dr. Mehta and various others involved in the excavation, we aimed to highlight the cultural importance of Evergreen Plantation. Primarily, its goal to preserve the history and lives of its many enslaved people. Using Adobe Premiere, I organized, edited, and constructed the documentary short film to be paired alongside the survey website.

Results

One of the most prominent and significant findings during the excavation was the foundation of what appeared to be a church, including a base of where a fireplace would have been. Buried very shallow underground, the reveal of this foundation opened the door to many other pieces found on the site and worked to create a clear centerpiece for the "research" tab of the website. Finding this church, and the many shards of different materials nearby, helped to create a structure for the website, and a clear overarching message to the documentary, which would



push the idea of community, and the importance of preserving the past.



Discussion

Although I did not have the pleasure of participating in the excavation of Evergreen Plantation, working alongside Dr. Mehta allowed me to fully understand the importance of the research, as well as my role in helping to preserve and display its findings. Having a centralized location to display all the data, as well introduce others to Evergreen's slavery database, and the surplus of information about the ancestry of those previously enslaved is truly special. These plantations were home to countless enslaved people, who persevered and started families, traditions, and a large part of the culture of black Americans in the south. Without a way to properly display and record this data, there are many people who would otherwise be unable to learn more about their lineage. Although plantations are often an object representing a very dark part of the United States' past, it is important to recognize the culture created, and how it cannot ever be lost. Through research such as this excavation, we are able to learn more about the lifestyles, religious practices, and craftsmanship techniques of those who were enslaved on the Evergreen Plantation. We are grateful for the opportunity to work alongside Evergreen to help accomplish their goal of preserving history.

Resources

- [1] DRUCKER, JOHANNA. "Humanistic Theory and Digital Scholarship." *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, edited by Matthew K. Gold, NED-New edition, University of Minnesota Press, 2012, pp. 85-95, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.cttv8hq.9>
- [2] Robinson, Lyn et al. "Library and Information Science and Digital Humanities: Two Disciplines, Joint Future?" *ISI* (2015)
- [3] Bethany J Slater, Meghana V. Kashyap, Casey M. Calkins, David Powell, David H. Rothstein, Matthew Clifton, Samir Pandya, Global dissemination of knowledge through virtual platforms: Reflections and recommendations from APSA/IPEG, *Journal of Pediatric Surgery*, 2022
- [4] *Evergreen Plantation*, <https://www.evergreenplantation.org/>