

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Cultivating Freedom: An Archaeology of Agency at the Clemens Farm

STUDENT: Jessica L. Clark

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This thesis explores the domestic architecture and material culture of the James and Sophia Clemens farm in Darke County, Ohio. The Clemens were free people of color in the early to mid-19th century, but their background was one of enslavement in Virginia. Their Antebellum Ohio farmstead is presented here as an example of individual agency within repressive systems of power, such as systemic racism and the capitalist world-system. The Clemens were agential both socially and materially, as is identified in the documentary record of their lives, their brick-constructed farmhouse, and the archaeological assemblage recovered during excavations at their farmstead. Architectural and archaeological data indicate that these individuals were practicing agency by assimilation, developing a domestic material life that was reflective of affluence both in the Midwest and the Eastern United States at that time.