

Exploring the Past: Archaeology in the Upper Mississippi River Valley

NEH Summer Institute July 12–30, 2010
University of Wisconsin–La Crosse
Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center

Field Trips and Field Activities

Field Trip (Wednesday, July 14)

- **The Driftless Area and the Upper Mississippi Valley**
Untouched by glaciation, the “Driftless Area” is known for its rugged ridge-and-valley topography, divided by the broad valley of the Mississippi. Scenic stops overlooking the Mississippi and at interior valleys and ridge tops will introduce you to the region’s landscape and environment, past and present.
- **The Dynamic Environment of a Driftless Area Valley: The Bad Axe River Valley**
Next you’ll explore the Bad Axe Valley, a secluded interior valley that will serve as a study area for the Institute. You’ll find out how archaeologists learn about past environments, and how this particular landscape and environment has changed since humans first arrived some 13,500 years ago.
- **Adaptive Strategies in the Driftless Area: Amish Case Study**
The Driftless Area is home to a growing population of Amish peoples who live at the interface between traditional and modern ways of life. As a follow-up to a classroom case study, we’ll visit an Amish community near Cashton, Wisconsin. You’ll see first-hand how the region’s Amish peoples have adapted to life in the Driftless Area, seeking to preserve traditional practices and beliefs while surrounded by and interacting with modern American culture.

Excavation Experience (Friday, July 16)

- **Introduction to the Cade Archaeological District**
This scenic portion of the Bad Axe River Valley is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and contains a number of important Archaic and Woodland archaeological sites, including burial mounds, a rockshelter, and open-air campsites. Landowner and avocational archaeologist Loren Cade will join the Institute Directors in introducing you to this fascinating archaeological area.
- **Excavation Instruction and Experience**
Through hands-on experience, you’ll learn the basics of archaeological excavation, including setting up excavation units, proper use of equipment, and how archaeologists excavate sites and record information. You’ll also learn about the serious responsibilities inherent to field archaeology, from deciding when and where to dig to using appropriate

methods for collecting artifacts and recording information. (**Note: This experience involves some moderately vigorous activity, potentially in hot weather.**)

Technology Field Day (Friday, July 23)

- **Demonstrations and Experimental Activities at the Cade Farm**

The field day will feature a variety of demonstrations and hands-on activities. You'll try using an atlatl (spearthrower) as well as pump and hand drills for grinding and fire-starting. Host Loren Cade will discuss bow-and-arrow technology and demonstrate a traditional bow and arrow. Then you'll experiment with making their own arrow using traditional materials and techniques. Institute Directors will lead discussions on the scientific basis and innovative nature of ancient technology (e.g., the physics of atlatls, the transition from spear to bow-and-arrow, and the principles behind detachable points).

- **Artifact Collecting: How Avocational and Professional Archaeologists Work Together**

Host Loren Cade will display his collection of artifacts and join Institute Directors in leading discussions on the ethics of artifact collecting and how hobbyists can contribute to archaeological research.

Field Trip (Tuesday, July 27)

- **Native American Mounds at Genoa, Wisconsin**

In this small town along the Mississippi River, Native American burial mounds have been preserved within a Euro-American cemetery. Institute Directors will lead a discussion on site-preservation and burials-related issues: Are mounds and burials protected? Who "owns" ancient human remains? What happens to human remains today?

- **Effigy Mounds National Monument in Marquette, Iowa**

Effigy Mounds National Monument encompasses one of the largest and best-preserved Native American mound complexes in the Upper Midwest. Located in a spectacular bluff-top setting overlooking the Mississippi River, these well-preserved earthworks include Hopewell burial mounds and Late Woodland effigy mounds formed in the shape of animals. Led by Institute Directors, you'll hike up the bluff to view the mounds and consider their roles as burial places and symbols of group unity. The park's interpretive center features a brief film and displays materials associated with the occupation of the area, and the gift shop offers a good selection of books and other resource materials. For more information, visit the Effigy Mounds Web site:

<http://www.nps.gov/efmo/index.htm>. (**Note: This stop includes a steep, vigorous hike up well-maintained trails.**)

- **Larson Cave in Crawford County, Wisconsin**

Larson Cave is a naturally formed sandstone cave that contains rock art and occupation debris that probably dates to the late prehistoric period, ca. 250 B.C. to A.D. 1500.

Here you'll see subtle rock-art designs well back in the cave's "dark zone," beyond the

reach of daylight. You'll also see signs of recent vandalism discovered when teachers from the 2007 NEH Institute visited this cave. Institute Directors will lead a discussion of caves and rockshelters in prehistoric settlement systems, rock art and its interpretation, and preservation and vulnerability of cave and rock-art sites. **(Note: This stop includes a hike with some rough, rocky terrain.)**

- **Battle of the Bad Axe, near Victory, Wisconsin**

At this location along the Mississippi River, Sauk and Fox men, women, and children were massacred by U.S. Army regulars and militia during a pivotal episode of the Black Hawk War of 1832. Institute Directors will summarize what occurred and lead a discussion of cultural misunderstandings and conflicts related to Euro-American settlement and competition over resources and land.

Field Trip (Thursday, July 29)

- **New Adaptive Strategies in the Driftless Area**

As the culmination of our case studies, we'll explore how our modern economy and evolving lifestyles have led to new adaptations for the region's residents. We'll look at how the traditional family farm is faring in today's economy, and how alternative adaptations such as niche-market organic farming have developed. We'll also see how traditional tobacco farming has been replaced by other land uses, such as vineyards.

- **Archaeological Consequences of Modern Land Uses**

Finally, you'll see how changing land uses, including urban development, have affected the region's archaeological sites. You'll visit the Sanford Archaeological District, a dense and extensive Oneota settlement that still exists under a heavily developed portion of the city of La Crosse. We'll also take you to a development-related excavation, if one is being conducted at that time. And we'll discuss the complex problem of managing archaeological resources in the face of ongoing development pressures.

Please note: If you have any questions or concerns regarding the physical activities involved in these field trips, please feel free to contact Bonnie Jancik at (608) 785-6473 or jancik.bonn@uwlax.edu.