



*MVAC at the University
of Wisconsin-La Crosse*

*Archaeology News
is a publication of
the Mississippi Valley
Archaeology Center*

www.uwlax.edu/mvac

*1725 State Street
La Crosse, WI 54601-3788*

Archaeology News

Volume 28 Number 2

February 2011

Important Archaeological Sites Saved in Vernon County, Wisconsin

James Theler, MVAC Senior Research Associate

A series of effigy mounds, an undisturbed rock shelter, and an important open-air habitation site have been saved forever, through a partnership between MVAC and the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC), with financial assistance from The Archaeological Conservancy (TAC) and the Wisconsin's Knowles-Stewardship Fund. These sites are located on a 70 acre parcel in the heart of the 660 acre Cade Archaeological District, a property on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The district has more than 20 prehistoric archaeological sites including at least 15 open-air habitation areas, 3 rock shelters, and 2 effigy mound groups. The Cade District has sites ranging from the early Paleoindian (13,500 years before present [ybp]) to the Mississippian (900 ybp) Cultures.

The Cade District is located along the North Fork of the Bad Axe River in Vernon County, some 13 river miles east of the confluence of the Bad Axe with the Mississippi River. The Bad Axe River has cut its meandering channel nearly 300 feet into the valley floor at the Cade District and forms part of the heavily dissected and rugged terrain of southwestern Wisconsin's unglaciated Driftless Area.

Archaeology

Vernon County has the greatest number of archaeological sites of any county in Wisconsin with 1445 recorded to date, and 91 of these sites are located in Harmony Township. This area lies within the region of the late prehistoric Effigy Mound Culture. In 1884-85 Theodore Lewis of the Northwestern Archaeological Survey conducted a mound survey in portions of Vernon County, focusing on the North and South Forks of the Bad Axe River. Lewis

recorded an astonishing 176 mounds in 29 distinct groups in Vernon County; the great majority of these have been lost farming, development, and erosion. One effigy mound group Lewis mapped in 1884 was relocated in 1993 by Ms. Christine Hall after being "lost" for over a century. This group of 14 effigy mounds comprises the Tollackson Mound Group, located 3 miles downstream (west) from the Cade District. This group is now on the NRHP and has been preserved by The Archaeological Conservancy. Lewis did not survey farther east along the North Fork of the Bad Axe, thus the Cade District mounds were not recorded until the 1980s by Robert (Ernie) Boszhardt, with the direction of Mr. Loren Cade.

Research inspired by the dense cluster of archaeological sites in the upper portion of the North Fork of the Bad Axe coupled with limited excavations conducted at habitation sites near the Tollackson Mound Group and in the Cade District resulted in a paper in the national archaeology journal, *American Antiquity*, that reconsiders recent thinking on the nature and demise of the Effigy Mound Culture.

A series of surface surveys and limited excavations associated with periodic field schools undertaken by the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (1995, 1996, 2005, and 2007) have documented abundant intact, sub-plow zone, archaeological deposits (features) at several Cade District occupation sites.

The most intense periods of occupation at the Cade District are represented by Middle and Late Archaic (circa 6000-3000 ybp), and Late Woodland habitation sites (circa 1500-950 ybp). The intensity of occupa-

-continued on p.2

Cade District, *continued from p.1*

tions throughout prehistory may be related to the number of perennial springs that discharge into the Bad Axe in the vicinity of the Cade District.

The recently acquired portion of the Cade District contains the most important sites in the Cade District.

1) Cade Mounds 1 is a group of six effigy mounds on a wooded slope overlooking the Bad Axe River, and located to the southeast of the Cade 9 site (see discussion below). The group includes one bird effigy, one turtle effigy, two linear mounds, and two indeterminate quadruped effigy types.

2) Cade Mounds 2 is a group with two mounds, one bird effigy and one linear mound, located on a hill slope to the northwest of the Cade 9 site and opposite to the Cade Mounds 1. The linear mound has one small depression that appears to be an old "looters" pit.

3) The Cade 9 site has produced a great number of surface collected artifacts with projectile points ranging in age from a Paleoindian fluted (Clovis) point, dozens of Middle and Late Archaic points, and a variety of Woodland Tradition points. These include many varieties of Late Woodland points, including small (Grant type) side-notched points. These appear to be local, contemporary copies of the well-known Cahokia side-notched points. Pottery found on the site includes a number of Woodland types, with the most common being

Late Woodland Madison ware, a type associated with the Effigy Mound Culture.

4) A probable fourth habitation site is called the Eagle-eye Rockshelter. This long, linear rock shelter is located facing east-southeast, and has not been tested by archaeological excavation. A one inch diameter soil probe recovered wood charcoal at a depth of one meter. Based on testing of other rock shelters in the Cade District, the presence of charcoal is suggestive of prehistoric use, probably multiple occupations.

The Cade 9 Site

Brief excavations were conducted at the margin of Cade 9 in 1995. While a considerable number of ceramic and lithic remains were recovered, these were restricted to the plow zone and filled areas that had apparently undergone erosion during a period of historic flooding that has been prevalent in the valley.

In 2007, limited test excavations were undertaken on Cade 9 by a UW-La Crosse archaeological field school. This excavation located three subsurface pit-type features. These features contained carbonized plant remains, especially corn and a few bones of white-tailed deer. One feature, Feature 2, contained numerous pottery sherds from at least two different vessels. One vessel is represented by cord-roughened body sherds that appears to be Madison Cord Impressed ware, the typical pottery type of the Effigy Mound Culture. The second vessel is assigned to the Great Oasis Culture, and is represented by rim, shoulder and body sherds. This Great Oasis vessel is the easternmost known occurrence and the only excavated occurrence in Wisconsin. Great Oasis was a village agricultural society supplemented by hunting and gathering wild resources, located in western Minnesota and western to central Iowa. This culture disappeared from the landscape sometime around A.D. 1050 to 1150.

Radiocarbon dates were obtained on samples of wood charcoal from the three Cade 9 pit features. The uncalibrated dates for Features 1 and 2 are A.D. 1060 +/- 30, and for Feature 4, A.D. 1040 +/- 30 years. These dates were calibrated, and all three dates had peaks from A.D. 1055 to 1075, and a second peak at circa A.D. 1155. The Great Oasis Culture has an approximate age range of A.D. 950 to 1100, suggesting the first peak based on the end date for Great Oasis. Does the occurrence of a Great Oasis vessel represent a person or group of people moving so far east into Wisconsin's Driftless Area from a Great Oasis diaspora? How did they find their way into the Bad Axe Valley? The Cade 9 is a very important site with intact cultural features that has the potential to answer this and many other questions.

MVAC Staff Contacts:

Executive Director

Dr. Joseph A. Tiffany, (608) 785-6465

Projects Director

Dr. Katherine Stevenson, (608) 785-8451

Main Office: (608) 785-8463

Newsletter submissions: (608) 785-8454 or
dowiasch.jean@uwlax.edu

MVAC Educational Programs are supported by:

The United Fund for the Arts and Humanities
The National Endowment for the Humanities

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
HUMANITIES

From The Director: Joseph A. Tiffany



Joseph A. Tiffany

Hello everyone. We had a busy fall working on a variety of projects. Vicki Twinde-Javner and Kathy Stevenson completed power line surveys for Dairyland Power. Wendy Holtz-Leith has completed the site report for the Jackson-Farnum Street project for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). Connie Arzigan has completed a survey for Olmsted County, MN. There is some additional survey work planned for the spring, and then the report to write. Work for WisDOT in Prairie du Chien is winding down, with some additional construction monitoring to do. Wendy and Kathy also did a survey for the U.S. Department of Fish & Wildlife in the Fergus Falls, MN area. Kathy and former MVAC staff member Cindi Stiles conducted a site monitoring workshop for THPO's (Tribal Historic Preservation Officers) last fall as well.

Kathy, Vicki and I took on the editorship of *The Wisconsin Archeologist*. This is a 3-year commitment, but we are excited by the prospect to work on one of the oldest continuous archaeological publications in the United States and to have MVAC involved. *Archaeological Sites Near Mobridge, South Dakota*, a book Kathy and I have been working on for what seems like forever, was finally published near December.

Last fall I presented a paper at the Plains Anthropological Conference, and Jim Theler and I each have chapters in a recent report to document cultural resources and their national significance along the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway in western Iowa. MVAC will again host a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for Teachers later this year. Activities will again include work in the Cade 9 National Historic Archaeological District. Jim Theler has a great article in this issue regarding preservation of three archaeological sites in the Cade district with support from the Archaeological Conservancy and the Knowles-Stewardship Fund. Be sure to check out his article. So. Busy, busy, busy!

Memberships and donations continue to come in. Our thanks to all of you for your continued help and support. Be sure to check out the upcoming events in the newsletter including the Artifact Show on Saturday, March 5th at Valley View Mall and the Public Field Survey on April 30 and/or May 1. Contact Jean Dowiasch at (608)785-8454 if you would like to exhibit at the Artifact Show or are interested in the field survey.

Just a reminder that MVAC and the UWL Archaeology Studies Program will host the Midwest Archaeological Conference October 13-15, 2011 at the La Crosse Center. The general public is welcome: www.uwlax.edu/mvac/mac2011.htm.

Education News

Matching Funds Grant The UW-La Crosse Foundation has once again provided a grant to encourage teachers to use MVAC educational resources. The grant matches a teacher/school's cost dollar for dollar. For more information, contact Jean at 785-8454 or dowiasch.jean@uwlax.edu.

MVAC MEMBERSHIP FORM

Consider becoming a member of MVAC

MVAC's innovative Public Education Program brings the excitement of archaeology to children and adults throughout the area. Become a member of MVAC and receive our newsletters, which report on programs, current research, upcoming events, and volunteer opportunities. Also, as a member, you will receive reminders of special "members only" events. Please remember that your contribution is tax-deductible.

Yes! I want to support the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center Programs!
Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail address: _____



Membership Categories

Patron: \$1000 and above
Benefactor: \$500 - 999
Supporting: \$100 - 499
Contributing: \$50 - 99
Active: \$35 - 49
Students: \$10

Please make checks payable to UW-L Foundation, Inc. for MVAC and send to MVAC, 1725 State St., La Crosse, WI 54601. Gifts to the UW-L Foundation for MVAC qualify as charitable tax deductions to the full extent of the law as applied to the individual circumstances of each donor. You can increase your gift's value if your employer has a matching gift plan. Check with your human resources office.



*MVAC at the University
of Wisconsin-La Crosse*

1725 State Street
La Crosse, WI 54601-3788

Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LA CROSSE, WI
PERMIT #545

www.uwlax.edu/mvac

Upcoming Events

Contact MVAC at (608) 785-8454 for more information or visit our web site: www.uwlax.edu/mvac

Artifact Show

Join MVAC staff at Valley View Mall to see artifacts representing the area's long history. Local collectors will display their personal collections of artifacts. View artifacts recovered from the MVAC excavations in 2010. Archaeologists will be on hand to answer questions. Bring in your own artifacts for help in their identification. Call MVAC at (608) 785-8454 if you would like to display your artifacts.

Date: Saturday, March 5, 2011

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Location: Valley View Mall
Onalaska, WI

Wisconsin Archaeology Month - May 2011

The Wisconsin Historical Society's website will have a complete listing of activities offered statewide:
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/hp/hp-week/index.asp>

MVAC Awards/Lecture

Current State of Affairs at Cahokia and Beyond: A View from the Top of Monks Mound

Cahokia, with a ritual core of four large plazas that envelop the largest earthen monument known as Monks Mound, comprises a cultural landscape of nearly 400 acres. This presentation discusses the ongoing research efforts of the presenter and others at Cahokia and the surrounding region.

Date: April 12, 2011

6:00 p.m. Social

6:30 p.m. Awards

7:00 p.m. Lecture

Location: Port O'Call, Cartwright Center, UW-La Crosse

Speaker: John E. Kelly, PhD
Washington University,
Department of Anthropology

Member Field Survey

Join Connie Arzigian surveying local fields to find unreported archaeological sites. Advanced registration required at 608-785-8454 or dowiasch.jean@uwlax.edu.

Date: Saturday and/or Sunday, April 30-May 1, 2011

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Location: Archaeology Center & Laboratories, UWL

Fee: Free admission for MVAC members