



*MVAC at the University
of Wisconsin-La Crosse*

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Mounds, artifacts highlight new park Eagle Eye State Natural Area Open to Public

Merrily Helgeson

A hilly 70-acre site along the Bad Axe River in Southwest Wisconsin, mostly undisturbed since Indians lived there centuries ago, has become a public park.

Eagle Eye State Natural Area, centered in the larger 661-acre Cade Archaeological District, has surrendered arrowheads, potsherds and other artifacts dating back thousands of years. The arching rock formation for which the park is named is part of an ancient rock shelter, and seven effigy mounds are scattered across the property. Plant communities, too, represent rare and endangered ecosystems.

Located on the North Fork of the Bad Axe in Vernon County about 13 miles east of the Mississippi River, Eagle Eye was bought in December 2010 from a private owner, Bernice Cade. The Mississippi Valley Conservancy, based in La Crosse, and national Archaeological Conservancy each contributed one-quarter and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources half of the \$165,000 purchase price. Boundary signs have been posted within the past few weeks, and a parking lot and information kiosk are to be added in 2012.

MVC officials are counting on visitors to treat any artifact finds respectfully by leaving them in place. Neighbors will be keeping a watchful eye, said MVC Conservationist Abbie Church, and most really important archaeological sites are well hidden.

"We're very sensitive to keeping the location of the mound kind of a secret to make sure no one goes in," Church said. "I'm not too worried about them finding it. I've stood right next to the mound and it's not obvious."

The area can be entered only on foot and only by fording the Bad Axe. "It's open to



Eagle Eye Rockshelter, part of a new State Natural Area in Vernon County.

the public for fishing and hunting, and it's definitely one of the top trout fishing spots in the area," Church said. "Another reason people would go would be to see the intact vegetation."

"The natural communities that we want to restore and the surrounding oak opening are what this whole Wisconsin landscape looked like 200 years ago. These are habitats that are declining and will eventually go extinct," Church said.

Farmer alerted archaeologists

Loren Cade found his first arrowhead when he was 8 or 9. He brought it home only to find that his grandmother and father had already collected a drawer full of them. The Cade family had been picking up artifacts from their fields ever since they began farming near the Bad Axe in the late 1800s.

"I decided to start keeping track of where I picked things up," Cade said. "That was Site #1. As time went on, when I found other points, there were new site numbers."

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-Eagle Eye, continued from page 1

Cade bought and farmed land near his father's and worked fulltime as a warehouse manager in La Crosse, but he also continued to explore the land. He organized his finds—arrowheads, awls, hide scrapers, axes, spear points—into a set of display cases that he has taken to schools and other public presentations.

He also kept up an interest in archaeology, taking classes at UW-La Crosse and volunteering for archaeological digs. "I kept saying 'we've got some stuff out here. Maybe you should come see.' When I mentioned effigy mounds, then they got excited."

Staff from the university's Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center did visit Cade's property, finding a wealth of undisturbed archaeological sites that led to the Cade Archaeological District being placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

One of Cade's teachers, UW-La Crosse archaeology professor James Theler, visited as well and led a series of digs. In the July 2006 issue of *American Antiquity*, Theler discussed possible reasons for the demise, in about 1050 A.D., of the Late Woodland Effigy Mound culture, evidence for which he'd found at the Cade site. Perhaps, he wrote, "mound-builders had started running low on deer and firewood at the same time that other tribes were moving in from the south. The mound-builders abandoned the Driftless Area and never returned," he said.



Loren Cade at Eagle Eye Rockshelter.

"What we have at Cade Archaeological District is a whole series of sites that have been only lightly explored," Theler said in a recent interview. "There's a great deal of material there."

He and others conducted a series of excavations from 1995 to 2007, Theler said, but no more are likely until archaeologists have specific questions they want answered. "We have gone out of our way not to excavate very much," he said. "You don't want to dig it away. You can destroy the very thing you're trying to save."

"We're getting good at systems that look under the ground, that can show at least hazy images," Theler said. "That technology is not terribly sophisticated now but it may become more sophisticated."

Theler himself has bought land neighboring Loren Cade's property. He plans to retire there and help look after Eagle Eye and its surrounding archaeological district.

Loren Cade is pleased to see the land he grew up on protected. "There's not going to be any bulldozers coming in, moving soil around," he said. "It's going to stay as it is forever."

Cade continues to cultivate his grapes and, at 70, hike the land. A former part-owner of Vernon Vineyards, Cade named one of the winemaker's new rose wines, using the name his grandfather had coined. It is Eagle Eye Blush.

Directions to Cade Archaeological District and Eagle Eye State Natural Area can be found on the Conservancy's website at mississippivalleyconservancy.org. Search for "Cade."

Freelance writer Merrily Helgeson (e-mail merrilyhelgeson@gmail.com) welcomes story ideas and assignments.

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MVAC co-hosts Midwest Archaeological Conference

Along with the UWL College of Liberal Studies, and the Archaeological Studies Program of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, MVAC welcomed over 400 archaeologists to the Midwest Archaeological Conference October 13 – 15, 2011. Held at the La Crosse Center, the conference included contributed papers and posters on current archaeological research on a wide range of topics. Workshops covered such topics as Public Outreach, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act from a Tribal Perspective, Lithics Exchange, Changes in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Facilities Development Manual, Paleoethnobotany, and a student workshop on Building your Career in Archaeology. A symposium honoring UW-La Crosse Professor Emeritus Dr. James L. Theler included presentations from MVAC/UWL staff members Dr. Constance Arzigian, Dr. Jonathon D. Baker, Dr. Katherine P. Stevenson, Dr. Joseph A. Tiffany, and volunteers Bill Gresens and Beth Hall.

In addition to the presentations, attendees also participated in a La Crosse Queen River Cruise, Reception and Open House at the Archaeology Center and Laboratories on campus, and Reception and Banquet at the La Crosse Center featuring Dr. Mark Seeman, Professor of Anthropology from Kent State University who talked on the Hopewell culture. Local field

trips included a Historic Downtown La Crosse Walking Tour, the Mississippian Presence in Trempealeau, and the Prairie du Chien area and Effigy Mounds National Monument.

The conference was a huge success, thanks to our many student volunteers and the staff of Continuing Education and Extension. Generous support for the conference was also provided by regional clients and agencies, including Dairyland Power Cooperative and Gundersen Lutheran Health System.



UWL archaeology students discuss area finds with archaeologists from throughout the Midwest.

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 jdowiasch@uwlax.edu.

La Crosse School District Archaeology Funds

Funding is available for La Crosse School District teachers to use Archaeology and Native American resources from MVAC. Teachers interested in using the funds should contact Jean Dowiasch at 608-785-8454 to schedule materials and presentations.

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!
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Upcoming Events

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

MVAC 2011 Awards and 30th Anniversary Kickoff Spirits of Earth: The Effigy Mound Landscape of Madison and the Four Lakes

Robert Birmingham discusses his new book that examines the ancient effigy mounds by looking at an area of Wisconsin where they are best described and preserved. Archaeologist and author Robert Birmingham teaches at the UW-Waukesha and writes from his home in Madison, WI.

Date: Thursday, February 16, 2012
Time: Social 6:00 pm, Awards 6:30 pm, Lecture 7:00 pm
Location: UW-L, Cartwright Center, Port O'Call
Speaker: Robert Birmingham

Artifact Show

Come to Valley View Mall and see artifacts representing the area's long history. Local collectors will display their personal collections of artifacts. See artifacts recovered from local excavations. Archaeologists will be on hand to identify your artifacts. E-mail jdowiasch@uwlax.edu or call at 608-785-8454 if you would like to display your artifacts.

Date: Saturday, March 3, 2012
Time: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Location: Valley View Mall, La Crosse, WI

Ancient Human Use of Aquatic Environments along the Northern Coast of the Gulf of Mexico

This presentation will examine how ancient human societies (200 B.C. – A.D. 1000) adapted to the coastal environments found along the northern reaches of the Gulf of Mexico.

Date: Thursday, April 5, 2012
Time: 7:00 pm
Location: UW-L, Cartwright Center, Port O'Call
Speaker: Jonathan Baker, Assistant Professor of
Archaeology, Dept. of Sociology and Archaeology, UW-L