

Project Profile: Red Wing Locality, Minnesota

One of the most compelling stories of the Red Wing Locality is the history of public/private partnerships to research, interpret, and steward the area's rich Native American heritage. There has been tremendous public interest in the sites of the Locality since they were first described during the Long expedition up the Mississippi River in 1823. Professional archaeological work in the area goes back to the early 1880s and continues to this day.

The modern histories of the Silvernale site (21GD03), the Energy Park site (21GD158), and the Mero/Diamond Bluff site complex (47PI02) provide excellent examples of the possibilities when landowners, public officials, private citizens and interest groups, and archaeologists work together toward common goals. As a case in point, the entire village portion of the Silvernale site was slated for industrial development in the early 1970s. Although approximately half of the village was eventually destroyed by factory construction, in 1999 the remaining half was donated to the Cannon Valley Trail, a local public recreational trail, for preservation.



Aerial photo of the Silvernale site. Image compiled by D. W. Johnson.

Since receiving the village remnant, the Cannon Valley Trail and specialists in Red Wing archaeology have been collaborating to formally delineate site boundaries, study artifact distributions across the village, compile and re-analyze existing site data, and spur public involvement through fieldwork, lectures, and installation of interpretive signage.



Volunteers help process artifacts from the Silvernale site at the Anderson Center in Red Wing. Image by D. W. Johnson.

Accomplishing the tasks involved in this project is a multi-disciplinary effort - the first significant research at the Silvernale site since 1950. In addition to a comprehensive program of shovel testing, the project has collected geophysical data over the remaining village area, and is working with multiple data sets to relocate unmapped excavation units dug between 1947 and 1976. The product of this collaboration is a plan of integrated research, interpretation, and stewardship that can be successfully applied anywhere.

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