

# EFFIGY MOUNDS

## Hudson Park

### HO-CHUNK HISTORY

- Ho-Chunk have been on this land since time immemorial, occupying this land for over 12,000 years.
- Ho-Chunk are descendants of the mound builders
- The land cessions of 1832 and 1837 forcibly removed the Ho-Chunk to Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Nebraska. However, many Ho-Chunk returned to Wisconsin.

**There were many attempts to remove the Ho-Chunk, however, the Ho-Chunk continued to return.**

<https://wisconsinfirstnations.org/ho-chunk-nation/>, <https://www.mpm.edu/educators/wirp/nations/ho-chunk/treaties-treaty-rights>

### MOUND INFORMATION

- There are three types of mounds:
  - Hemispherical (conical)
  - Ovate (shaped like an egg or an oval)
  - Linear embankments
- They tend to be on higher ground near bodies of water
- Effigy mounds cover the southern region of Wisconsin, and small parts of Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois. A few can also be found in northern Wisconsin.
  - Madison has the highest concentration of mounds in the state.
- Many mounds are lost to agriculture and development
  - ~80% of the over 15,000 mounds from the mound building period in Wisconsin have been destroyed
- **Effigy mounds:** Larger mounds that were created to resemble animals, spirits, or even human figures called effigy mounds that were built mostly 1,000-1,300 years ago
- Mounds of all types were created between 350-2,800 years ago
- The purpose of mounds:
  - Mounds usually correlate to burial sites, as archeological evidence points to, but not all hold this purpose
  - Items found include pottery, pipes, arrowheads
  - Rare finds in this area
  - Structures associated with burial can be found underneath the mound surface
- Mound creation:
  - Some mounds were created through digging out a space then refilling it with dirt
  - Others were built on top of the ground surface, either it was cleared of grass and other plants prior to forming the mound or the dirt was placed on top the grass

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### MOUND BUILDING IN WISCONSIN

#### EARLY WOODLAND STAGE (~ 700 B.C. TO 0 A.D.)

- Indigenous peoples first began using clay pottery for food-related purposes. They harvested plants and aquatic and terrestrial animals from different seasonal camps across regions. There is evidence that some built conical mounds to bury their dead, yet few have been positively identified in the Madison region.

#### MIDDLE WOODLAND STAGE (0 A.D. TO ~500 A.D.)

- Increase in mound building
- Many large conical mounds found dating to this period
  - Mounds were constructed in groupings
- Evidence of deceased being buried long after death, indicating mounds weren't constantly constructed but rather made only at specific times
  - Use of ash, clays, special soils, and other materials within the mounds that are known to represent the soul's rebirth in Indigenous cultures

## LATE WOODLAND STAGE (~ 650 A.D. TO 1200 A.D.)

- Peak of mound building in the Madison region
  - Radiocarbon dating can trace a large amount of these mounds to the period of 800 A.D. to 1100 A.D.
- Emergence of corn farming and bow and arrow hunting
- Groupings of conical, linear, and effigy mounds were built
  - Usually found in high areas overlooking waterways or wetlands
  - Usually nearby annual and high-yield food sources suggesting they were in places of congregation
  - These mounds were also built nearby to prior mound groups in occasion
- Mound grouping and size varied
  - Some groups totaled more than 50 individual mounds
  - Some mounds were extraordinary large
    - Mendota State Hospital bird effigy – 628 foot wingspan
    - Edna Taylor Conservancy linear mound – originally over 700 feet long

## POST 1200 A.D. AND EUROPEAN CONTACT

- Mound building began to decrease or cease around 1200 A.D. Ho Chunk and other Indigenous groups occasionally used existing mounds until the 19th-Century

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/planning/documents/Native%20American%20Mounds%20in%20Madison.pdf>

## EFFIGY MOUND MEANING

- One explanation is the effigy depiction is related to the clan of the deceased
- **Clan:** A social group that tracks male descent to one common ancestor
- Split into upper and lower world in Ho Chunk culture
  - Upper:
    - 4 clans
    - Birds and flying creatures
  - Lower
    - 8 clans
    - Earth
      - Represented as bears and other land-based animals
    - Water
      - Creatures with long tails that can look like big cats or lizards. They usually have multiple animal features on a animal-like figure

## SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

- More bird mounds in western wisconsin
  - More bluff and valley presence in western Wisconsin, higher locations that are closer to the sky
- More water spirits in eastern wisconsin
  - More lakes and bodies of water in eastern Wisconsin
- Not for sure clan-related, but these would correspond with each area's geography

## CONFLICTING EXPLANATIONS

- Some also argue that these mounds are representative of the territory of the people who built them
- Some argue these represent resources present in the area the mounds were built
- The meaning behind the mounds may have changed during the long period effigy mounds were being built
- Linear and hemispherical mounds may represent effigies that we cannot understand
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**These mounds may have had a specific meaning they were conveying, but regardless of our understanding of this, the mounds were highly important cultural centers that were used for more than just burials. These mounds are a continuous reminder to all of the connection we have with the world around us.**

# MOUND PROCEDURES

- Remain 20 ft away from the edges of the mound to create a buffer zone from foot traffic
- Avoid low-cut, consistent mowing of mounds
  - Use of push mower on highest cut to avoid scalping and erosion of the mound
- Brush management on top of mound
- Use of prescribed burns as necessary
- Replanting of native plants near mounds
  - Decrease erosion, deep root issues

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/parks/documents/BurialMoundsRulesRegs.pdf>

## HUDSON PARK SITE

- These 3 total mounds were a part of the larger grouping of mounds stretching from the Yahara River to Olbrich Park
- This grouping included approximately 22 mounds
- Most of these mounds were destroyed by residential development
- Included a Bird effigy with wingspan of ~568 feet ([see Elmside image 2](#))

## LAND

- The land in Madison was oak savanna and wetlands.
  - Oak savanna is a prairie of grasses and scattered oak trees and is maintained by fire and grazing by animals.
  - The Ho-Chunk, as well as passenger pigeons and bison have helped to maintain the oak savanna in the past
  - Oak savannas were very common in the Midwest, but are currently rare plant communities in the Midwest and are highly endangered.

## DEPICTIONS

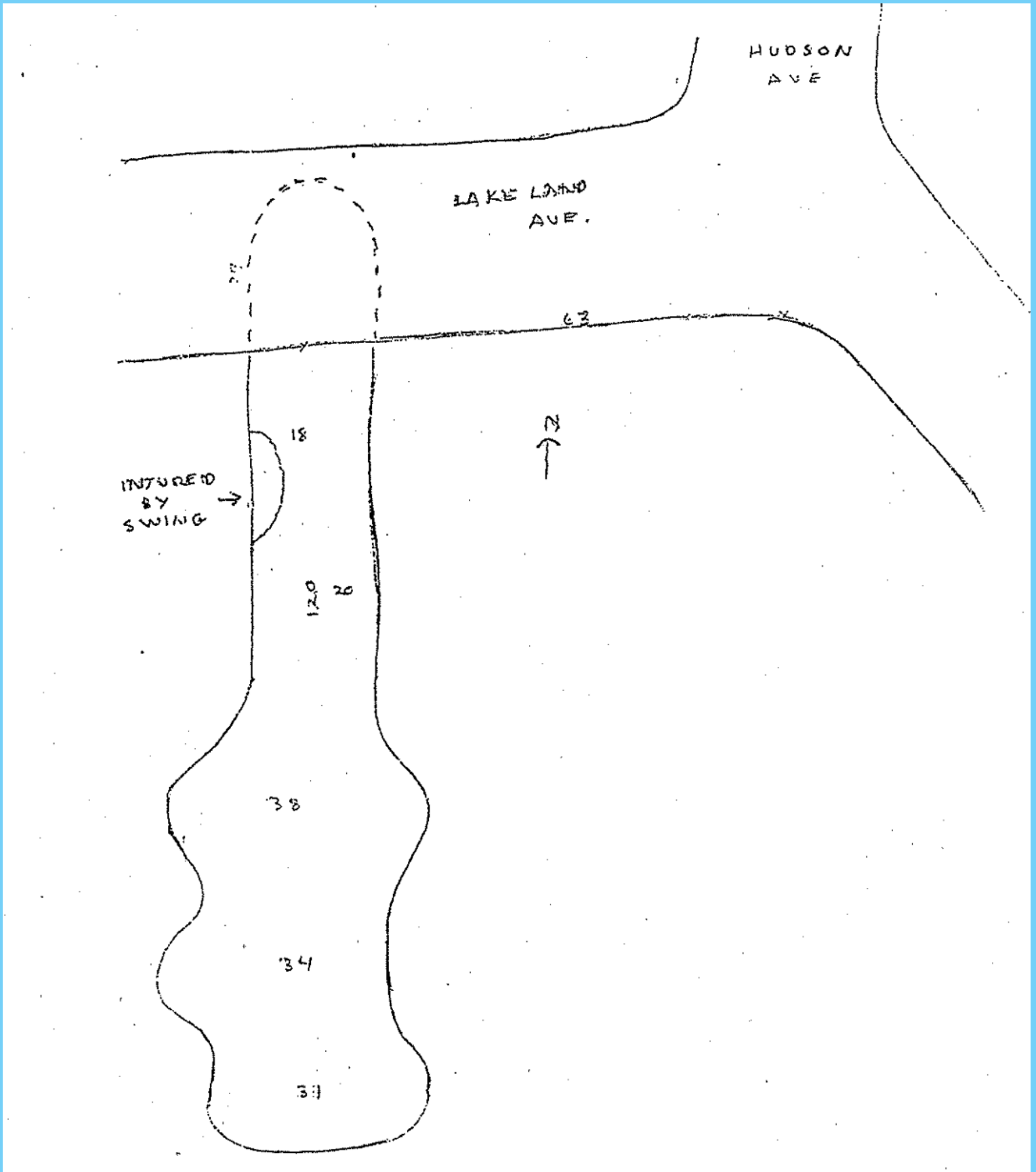
- [Mill's Woods](#) (stop 1)
  - A lizard, turtle, or panther
- [Elmside](#) (stop 2)
  - Referred to as a lynx and bear on current signage, but possibly representing a bear and a deer. Their representations are not fully known

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/planning/documents/Native%20American%20Mounds%20in%20Madison.pdf>

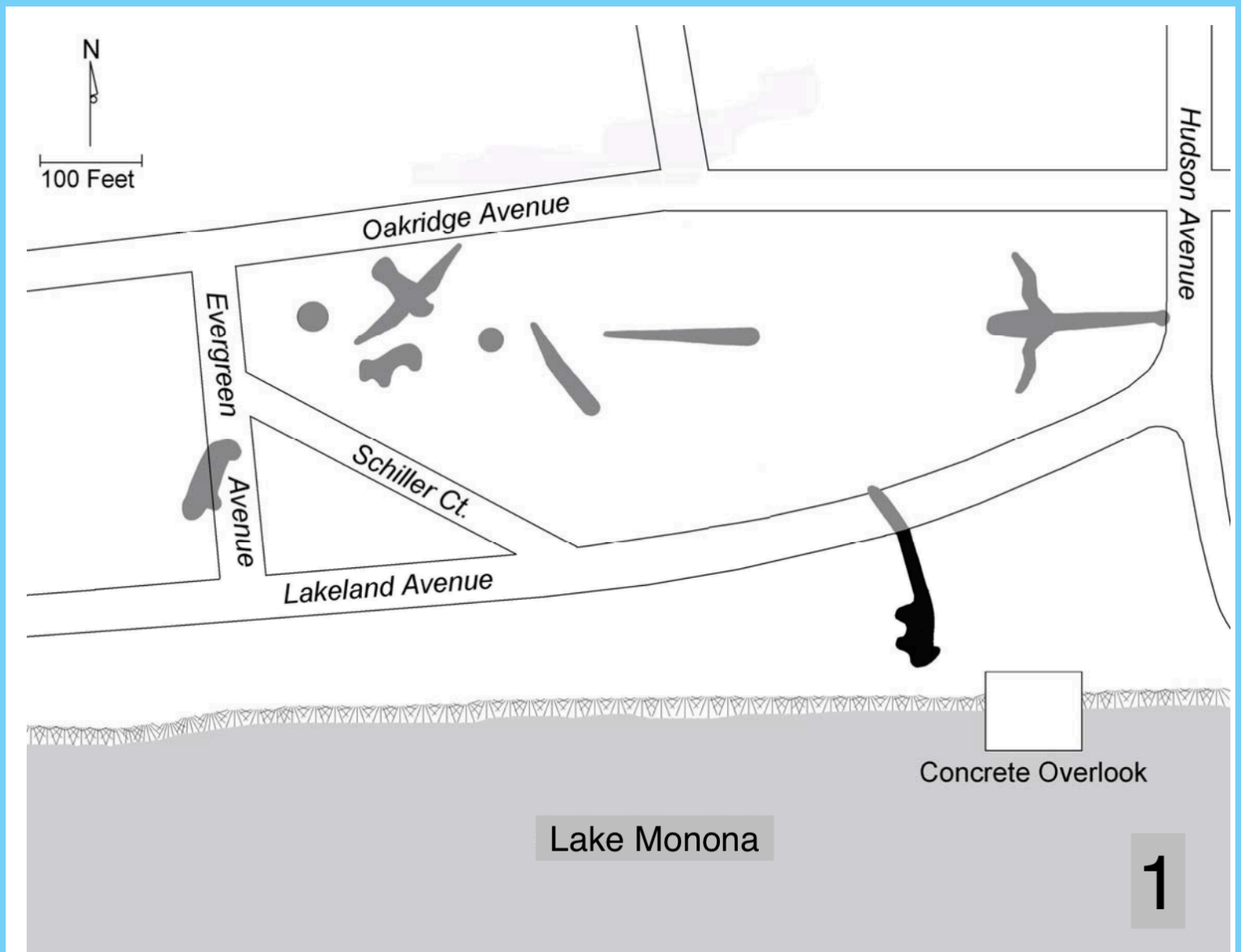
## MORE INFORMATION

- City of Madison Parks page has a great map of all the area parks with historical features, including effigy mounds
  - Can be found [here](#)
- Visit this [site](#) for specific information on the Hudson Park mounds

# MILL'S WOODS

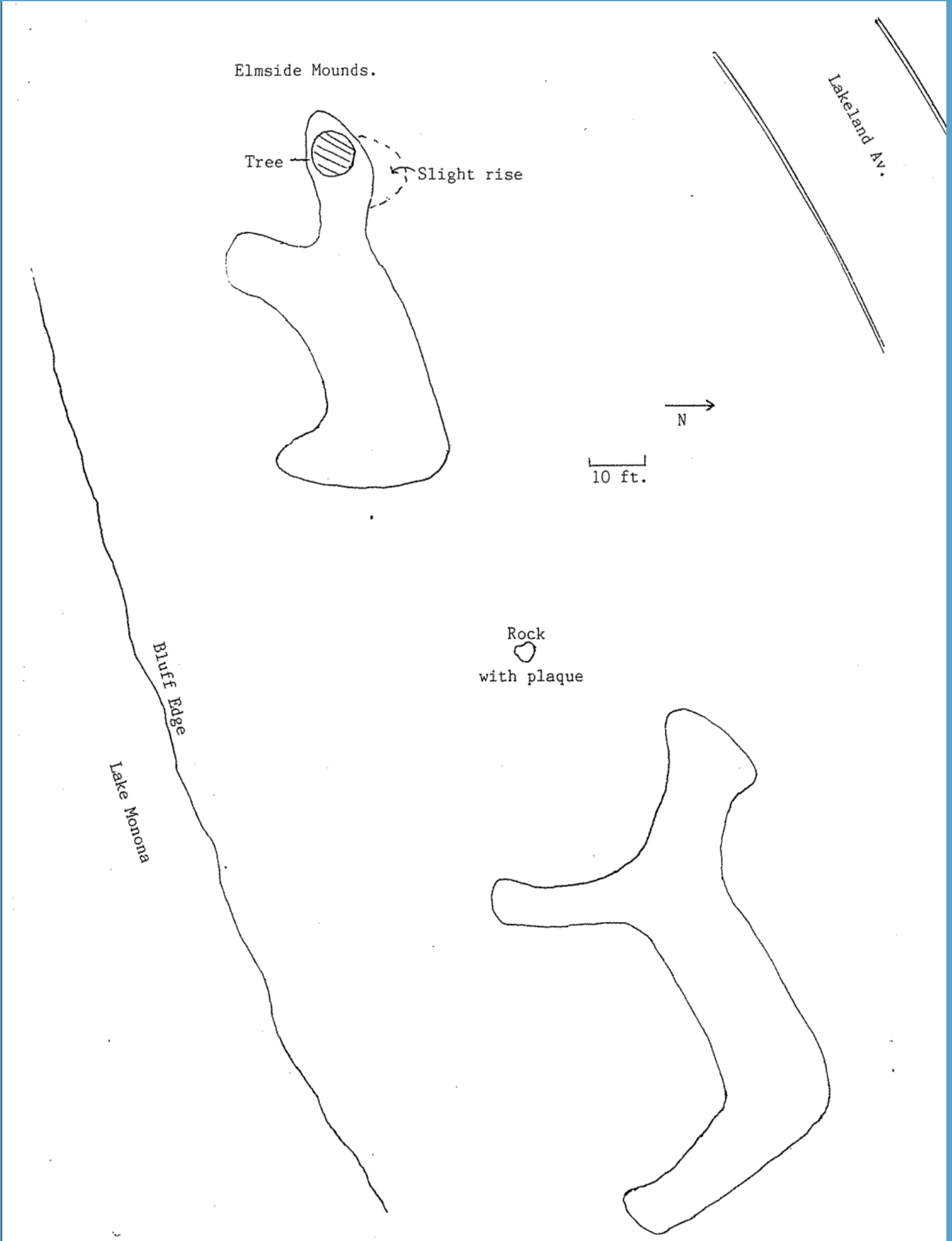


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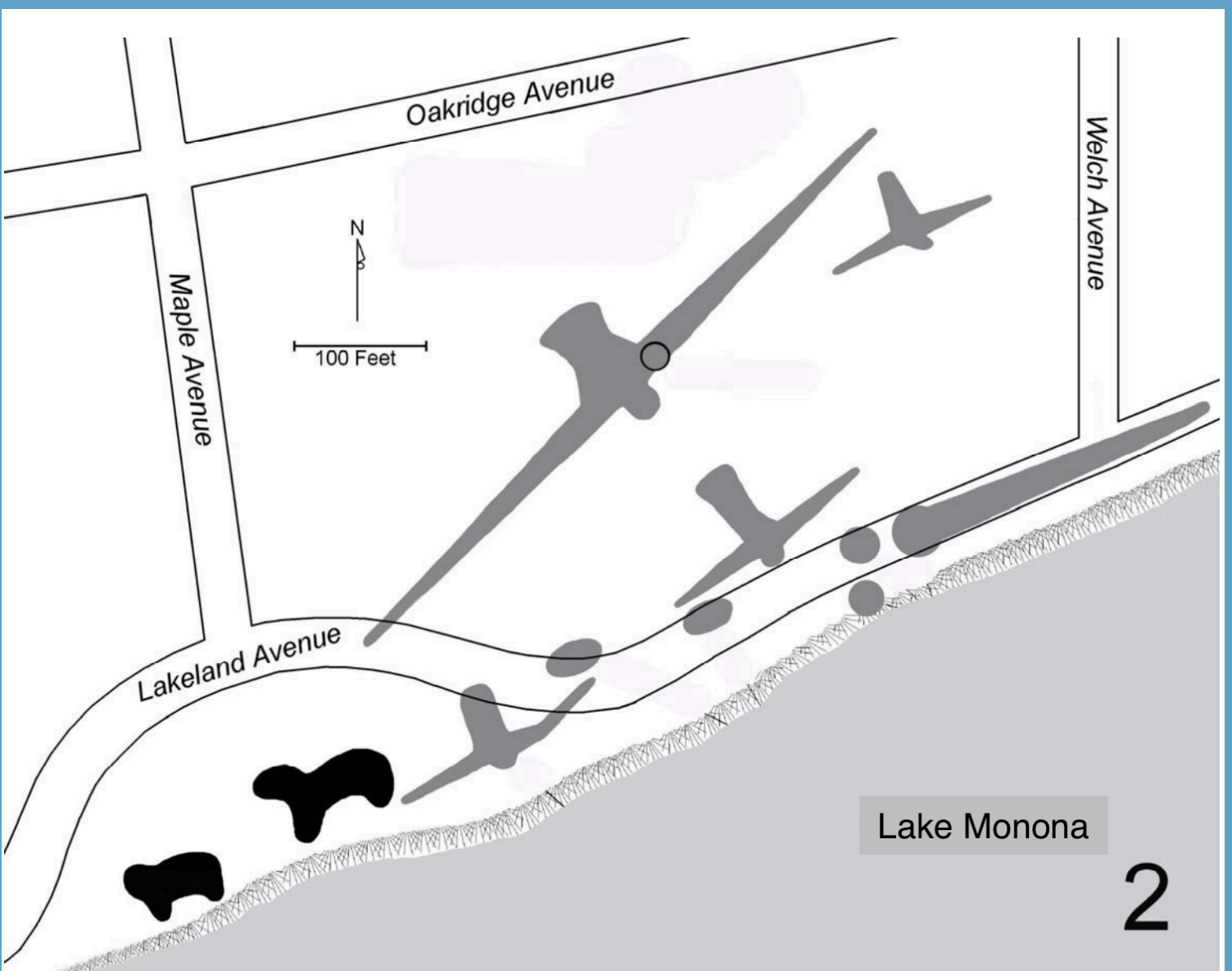


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# ELMSIDE



<https://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/planning/documents/Native%20American%20Mounds%20in%20Madison.pdf>



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