

Forward

The impetus for writing this book came from the gracious loan of artifacts from The Milwaukee Public Museum, which were the centerpiece of the exhibit *Unearthed: Evidence of the first people of Marquette County*. The exhibit took place from August 11 through November 25, 2007.

In doing research for the display of artifacts and accompanying exhibit, Dawn Scher Thomae of the Milwaukee Public Museum suggested that if we were going to do a catalog of objects, that we should consider broadening that into a book. The idea took off and the result is this book.

The board and volunteers of the Montello Historic Preservation Society are not anthropologists, archaeologists, or even trained historians. We are just citizens of Marquette County who are very interested in the history of where we live. Thus, while we feel confident that the content of this book is as accurate as the data available to us at the time of its writing, (and because of the generous input and review of the experts acknowledged elsewhere) the book is written not as a text book or research volume, but for people like us. People who love to learn more about who came before us.

This book ends its description of who lived in Marquette County before the European traders and settlers came to the area. That is left for another book.

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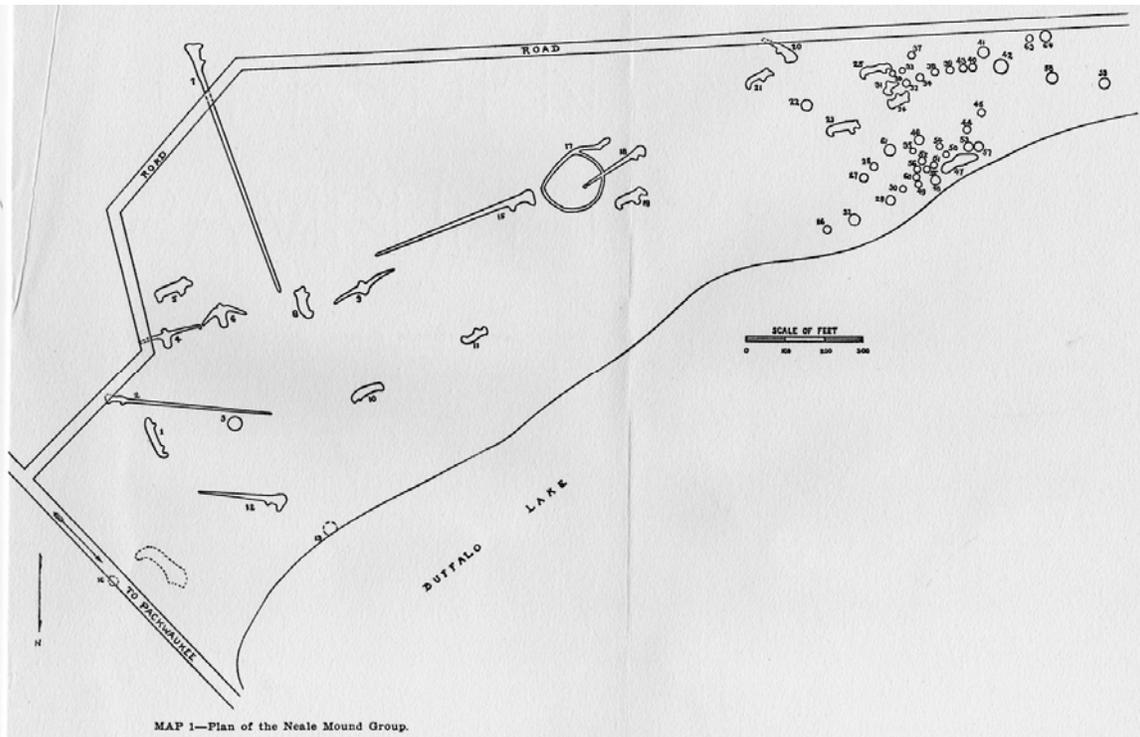
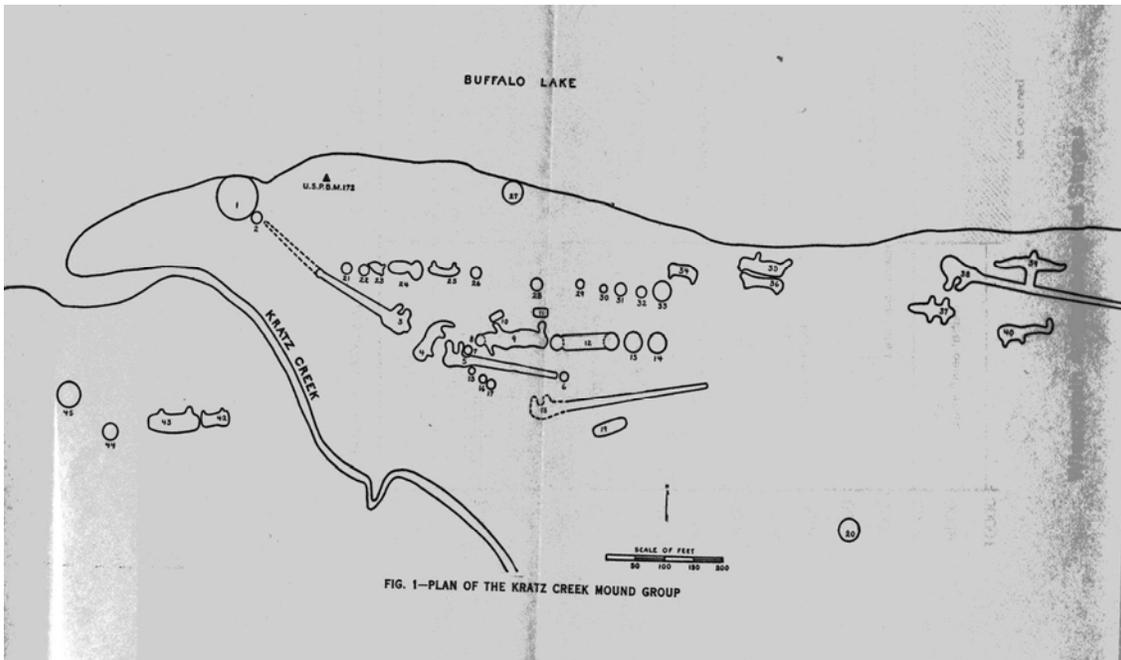
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The diagrams above are of the Kratz Creek and Neale Mound groups. The diagrams come from Bulletins of the Public Museum of the City of Milwaukee Volume 3 numbers 1 and 3, 1919 and 1928 respectively.



This photo is from the collection of the Milwaukee Public Museum and shows the Neale mound group before excavation but after cutting down trees that had grown up through the mounds. Buffalo Lake is in the background.

During these excavations many complexities and variations of the mounds were discovered. The earliest mounds built by Woodland people were conical (cone-like) in shape and in later years, the people built mounds in various shapes. The conical mounds were built by Early Woodland people (and even late Archaic Tradition people) as early as 800 BC. Effigy mounds began being built about 800 AD. The areas of mound building in Marquette County were inhabited and used for hundreds of years by the mound builders, with effigy mounds being built over conical mounds and other effigy mounds being built on top of other effigies at times.

Mounds have been recorded, described, destroyed, and confirmed all around what is now Marquette County. The greatest concentration of mounds is around Buffalo Lake extending from Montello to Endeavor. Germania, Briggsville, and near Lake Puckaway also were sites of mounds as well as the far northwest corner of Marquette County.

It was discovered that some of the builders carefully layered various colors of dirt and clay within the mounds. In the Kratz Creek group, the archaeologists found four kinds of earth: fine, light yellow sandy loam; golden sand; brick red sand; and red clay. There are also areas of fire blackened earth indicating that fires were used during whatever ceremonies took place at these mound sites.

It seems likely that the people who built and used the mounds used them at certain times of the year when they were in that location seasonally and when the earth could be opened for burials and building. Robert Birmingham and Leslie Eisenberg, in their book *Indian Mounds of Wisconsin*, say, “We are especially interested in the ‘worldview’ and belief systems of these ancient people because mound construction, as it is now understood, has more to do with the symbolic relationships of people with the spirit worlds than with the practical need to dispose of the dead.”

At least some of the effigy mounds started with an intaglio, or depression dug in to the earth at some depth, in the shape of the effigy. Then intricately layered sands and earth were applied. The mounds took more than one season to build and there is evidence that they were used sometimes for years. At least one mound at the Kratz Creek