

The Mounds

The park's group of eleven mounds contains animal, bird and conical mounds, as well as a section of an old Indian Trail. The mounds vary in length from 75 to 222 feet, and in width 15 to 30 feet. The most outstanding mound in the park is the 222 foot Turtle Mound. Stephen D. Peet, editor of American Antiquarian, did a comprehensive survey of the group in 1898 and called this mound a lizard "because the legs of the lizard are generally crooked and can be easily recognized from their peculiar shape." A photo of this turtle mound, taken in 1915, appeared for years in The World Book Encyclopedia. Winnebago Indians, as cited in 1911, indicate the lizard and turtle mounds may be their mythical "water spirit."



Take Highway 26 south. Turn left onto Groeler Rd. Continue straight onto Garvert Ln. Continue onto Old Hwy 26. Turn right onto Koshkonong Mounds Rd. Continue past Vinne Ha Ha Road to parking lot. Watch for the historic marker on your left.

Hoard Historical Museum

401 Whitewater Avenue
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538
920-563-7769

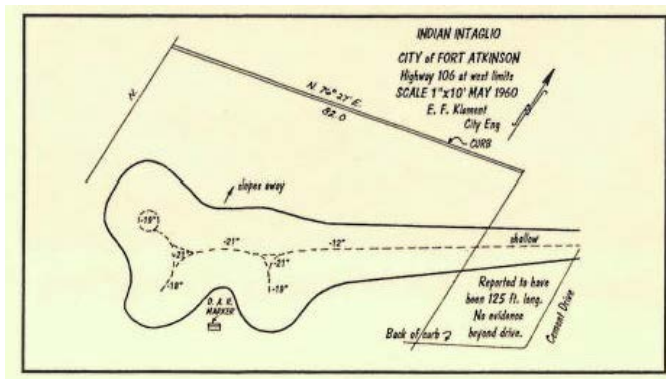
www.hoardmuseum.org

Panther Intaglio Mound

On Hwy 26, just west of downtown Fort Atkinson, a historic marker identifies the only complete surviving intaglio in North America. Dr. Lynne Goldstein, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, wrote: *One of the most unusual types of Effigy Mounds in not a mound at all. It is a form called an "intaglio," and it is actually a "negative" mound, formed by scooping out the earth to leave an indented impression of an animal. Intaglios are shallow, maybe a foot deep, and contain no burials. Less than a dozen intaglios have ever been reported, and all are either panther or bear in shape. The only complete surviving intaglio is in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin.*

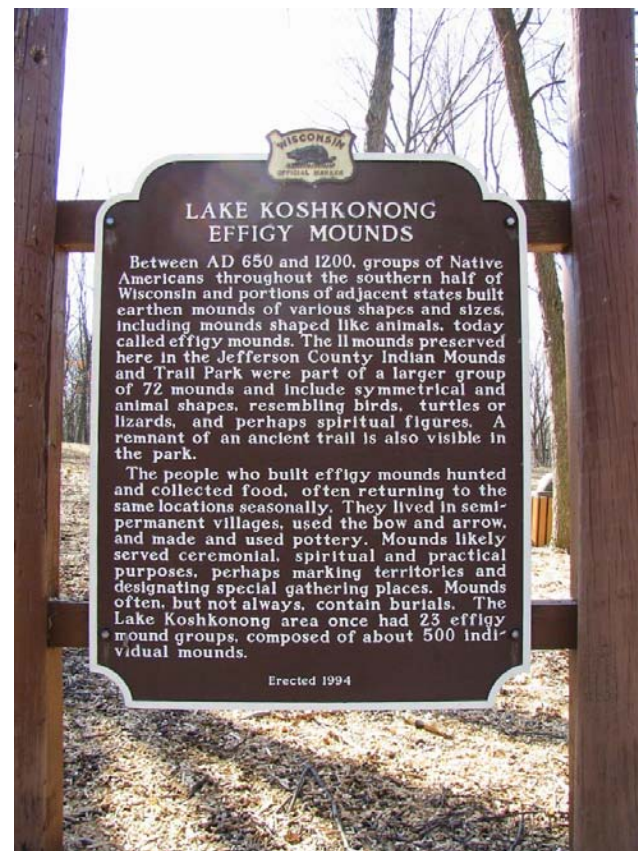
Stephen D. Peet wrote in 1920 that he thought the Intaglio was used to protect a nearby Indian cornfield from animals that might invade when the corn was ripening. A round mound could serve as a lookout and the intaglio for a hiding place from which the watchman could shoot the animal. Some authorities wondered if the intaglios were "in-ground" sections of regular effigy mounds left unfinished, while others suggest they may have been filled with water to produce animal-shaped pools for religious ceremonies. However, no research supports any of the explanations.

In 1919, Fort Atkinson's chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution leased the land on which the intaglio is located, to protect and preserve the ancient mound. Today it is marked by an official State Historical Society marker.



JEFFERSON COUNTY INDIAN MOUNDS AND TRAIL PARK

Take a Walk Through History



This park is part of the
Jefferson County
Parks System

Take a Walk Through History...

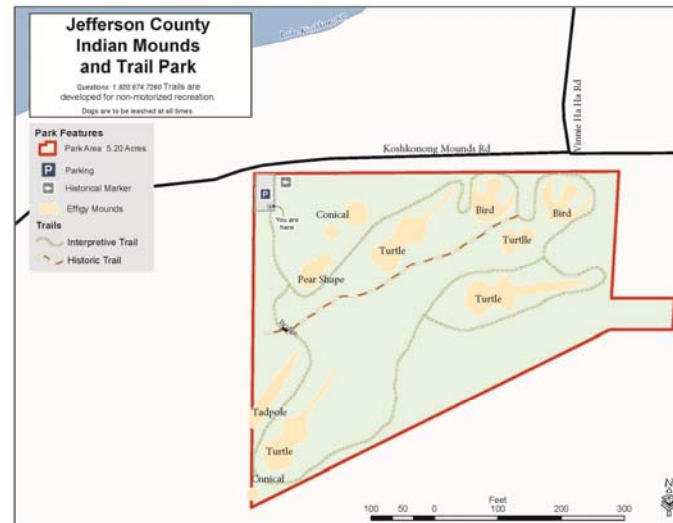
... to see *eleven Ancient Indian Effigy Mounds* that have survived for about 1,500 years! You'll be able to identify the Mounds as you walk, but the best view of the various shapes and sizes of the mysterious mounds is from the air. Looking down from on high, the shapes of birds, turtles and lizards pop into clear view, almost as quickly as questions pop into the viewer's mind. Where did the shapes originate... who built the mounds... and why?

Some questions have been answered by historians who claim that the ancient mounds were built between AD 300 to 1642 by groups of semi-nomadic American Indians. They lived in semi-permanent seasonal villages, engaged in limited agriculture, used the bow and arrow, and made and used pottery.

But why did the people build effigy mounds? Historians can only guess. Perhaps the mounds served ceremonial, spiritual, or practical purposes. Perhaps they were used to mark territories or designate gathering places. Were they burial mounds, or places of sacrifice? Some, but not all, contain burials. Could they have been used as foundations for village buildings? Recent archeologists, in digging shallow tests through the park, have discovered unusual amounts of antiquities among the mounds, but few artifacts in other areas. These antiquities include potsherds and flint chips. Why were the mounds built in the shape of animals and birds that can be seen so clearly from the air but not so clearly from ground level? Perhaps you will have some theories of your own!

As you walk through the park and through history, you will see the only remaining remnant of a pre-historic Indian trail that runs through a mounds group. Imagine, as you walk, that you are an ancient Native American.

You've traveled far along the trail to reach one of your villages that is tucked into the bank of Lake Koshkonong. The sacred mounds have great significance to you, so you are extremely careful not to walk on them or mutilate them in any way, because these mounds will survive you and your children and your children's children, for 1,500 years... and beyond!



Discovering the Mounds

In what has been described as "a sacred place," the rare effigy mounds in this park have been left relatively undisturbed since white occupation in 1836; not plowed, not put to crops or built upon. Surely a miracle!

The eleven mounds in the park are at the southern end of the large General Atkinson Group which originally consisted of 72 mounds within a distance of less than a mile: 39 conical, 15 linear, 3 tapering linear, 8 bird effigies, 5 turtle effigies and 2 unidentifiable forms. These were mapped by A.B. Stout and H.L. Skavlen between 1906 and 1908. Many of these mounds have been destroyed over the years by careless behavior and indifference. Earlier, in 1850, mounds within the park had been described by historian Increase A. Lapham. Earlier yet, in 1835, surveyor, H. Burnham, located and recorded the Old Indian trail.

In 1983, archeologists worked to relocate and map 20 of the 40 extant mounds in the General Atkinson Group. They found the southern half, where the park is, to be basically unaltered except for road construction and the loss of one mound. In 1993, Hugh Highsmith purchased the land containing the select group of 11 mounds and, with assistance from the Fort Atkinson Historical Society, gave the site to Jefferson County to become the Jefferson County Indian Mounds and Trail Pak.

Today, *you* are discovering the mounds. Please help preserve this valuable heritage. No record exists of any person ever finding a "treasure" in an Indian Mound in this county. Mound builders did not include "grave gods," not even pottery, and skeletons are so deteriorated that only an expert can discover their presence. Promiscuous digging is prohibited, as it would destroy this heritage forever, and make futile any later excavation by experts. We must preserve what we have, so future generations may also *discover the mounds*.