

THE HISTORY OF LIZARD MOUND COUNTY PARK

Lizard Mound Park was established in 1950. The park was acquired from the State of Wisconsin in 1986.

Lizard Mound is named for its most outstanding effigy mound shaped like a gigantic lizard. Lizard Mound County Park consists of 28 fine examples of effigy mounds that rise three to four feet above the surrounding ground level.

Native Americans we now know as the Effigy Mound Builders lived in Wisconsin and bordering states between 700 and 1200 A.D. These Native Americans built mounds shaped like mammals, reptiles, birds and other creatures both real and mythical. The custom of building effigy burial mounds died out about 800 years ago; it was a custom unique to this general area. Unfortunately, very little else is known about the Mound Indians. Even Native Americans who lived in Wisconsin when the first European settlers arrived didn't know why, or by whom, the mounds were built.

The earliest data concerning the mounds in the area of Lizard Mound County Park was in the form of a sketch map resulting from field investigations made by Professor Julius L. Torney of Milwaukee in 1883. In his sketch of the mound group, Professor Tourney illustrated a total of 47 Indian mounds. Archeological explorations were conducted in 1960. Exploration of some of the effigy mounds has revealed that the dead were sometimes placed in pits and the effigy mounds were built over the pits. Artifacts such as clay pots, projectile points, pipes, bone harpoons and beads were sometimes placed with the dead. It has been speculated that the shapes of the mounds had a religious or clan significance, but no one really knows for sure.