

Classroom Activity—American Indians of Wisconsin Effigy Mounds Activity

Objective: Students will explore effigy mounds in Waukesha County, including their history, location, and types.

Materials:

- **Effigy Mounds Fact sheet** (one per student or group)
- **Effigy Mounds - Carroll College sheet** (one per student)
- **Effigy Mounds Questions sheet** (one per student)
- **Writing utensil**

Backstory: About 2500 years ago, American Indians began mound building. The shapes of these mounds varied. Conical mounds were shaped like cones or domes, and linear mounds were long embankments. Just over 1000 years ago, American Indians began to make effigy mounds, or mounds shaped like animals or people. They made effigy mounds for over 300 years.

Effigy mounds are unique because they are only found in Southern Wisconsin, Southeastern Minnesota, Northeastern Iowa, and Northern Illinois. Common shapes found in Wisconsin include birds, deer, buffalo, lynxes, turtles, and panthers.

Archaeologists still debate the purpose of these mounds. Possible uses include ceremonial purposes like burials, to mark celestial events or seasonal observances, and as territorial markers or boundaries between groups. The Waukesha County Historical Society & Museum sits on the site of a former turtle shaped effigy mound. Hundreds of mounds were built in Waukesha County, but most have been destroyed due to plowing, farming, and grading.

Increase Lapham surveyed Wisconsin mounds in the early 1850s including those found on what is now the Carroll College Campus in Waukesha. It is believed that the mounds he found were constructed for ceremonial purposes. Only 2 of the 10 he originally surveyed are still there.

Activity

- Pass out the **Effigy Mounds Fact Sheet**, the **Effigy Mounds - Carroll College** sheet, and the **Effigy Mounds Questions** sheet to students and review materials together.
- Have the students work in groups or individually to answer the questions on the **Effigy Mounds Questions** sheet.
- Discuss the answers together.
- Ask the students to ask or write down questions about effigy mounds that they still have after completing the activity. Explain that archaeologists are still trying to answer questions about the mounds, but some things remain mysteries.

Name _____

Date _____

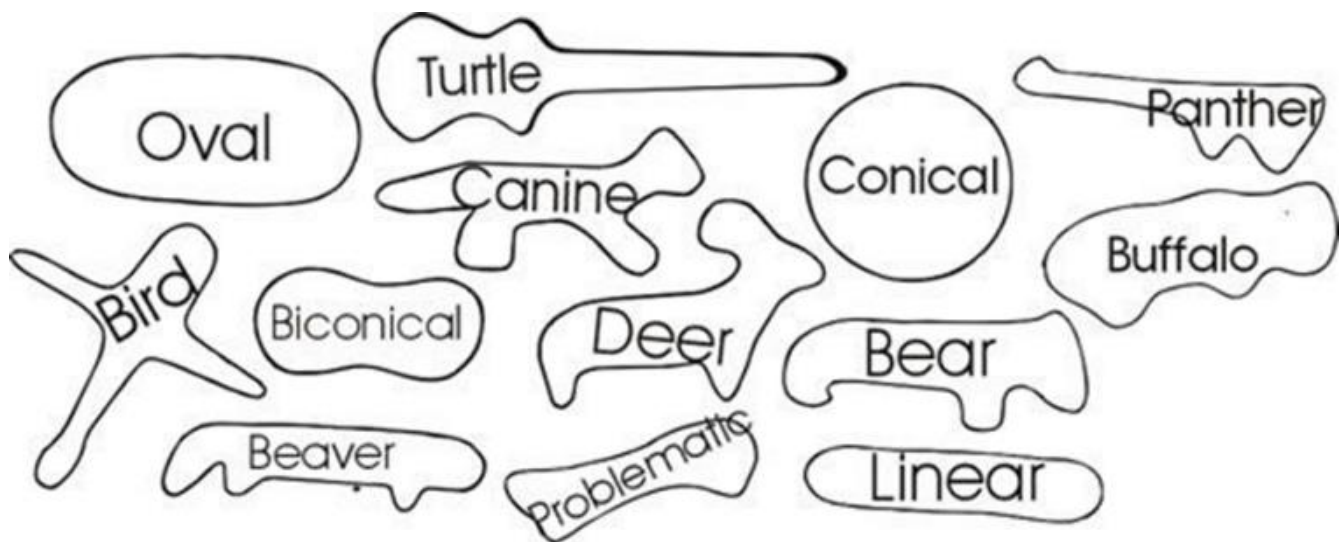
Effigy Mounds Fact Sheet

For many hundreds of years, the Native peoples of Wisconsin build mounds out of rock and dirt. Some of them were shaped like cones or domes, and some were more long or linear in shape. Then, just over one thousand years ago, American Indians in the area began to make effigy mounds shaped like animals or people.

Common shapes of effigy mounds found in Wisconsin include the bird, panther, deer, buffalo and turtle. The Waukesha County Historical Society & Museum sits on the site of a former turtle shaped effigy mound.

In the past, archaeologists (scientists who study things that people made, used, and left behind) dug into the mounds to find what was inside of them. This is not done anymore in order to respect the wishes of the American Indians who are descendent from the effigy mound builders. We know from past excavations that most mounds contain human bones, and some contain animal bone, shell rock, and deposits of charcoal and ash. Some people buried in the mounds were buried with arrows, pottery, pipes, stone tools, and shell jewelry.

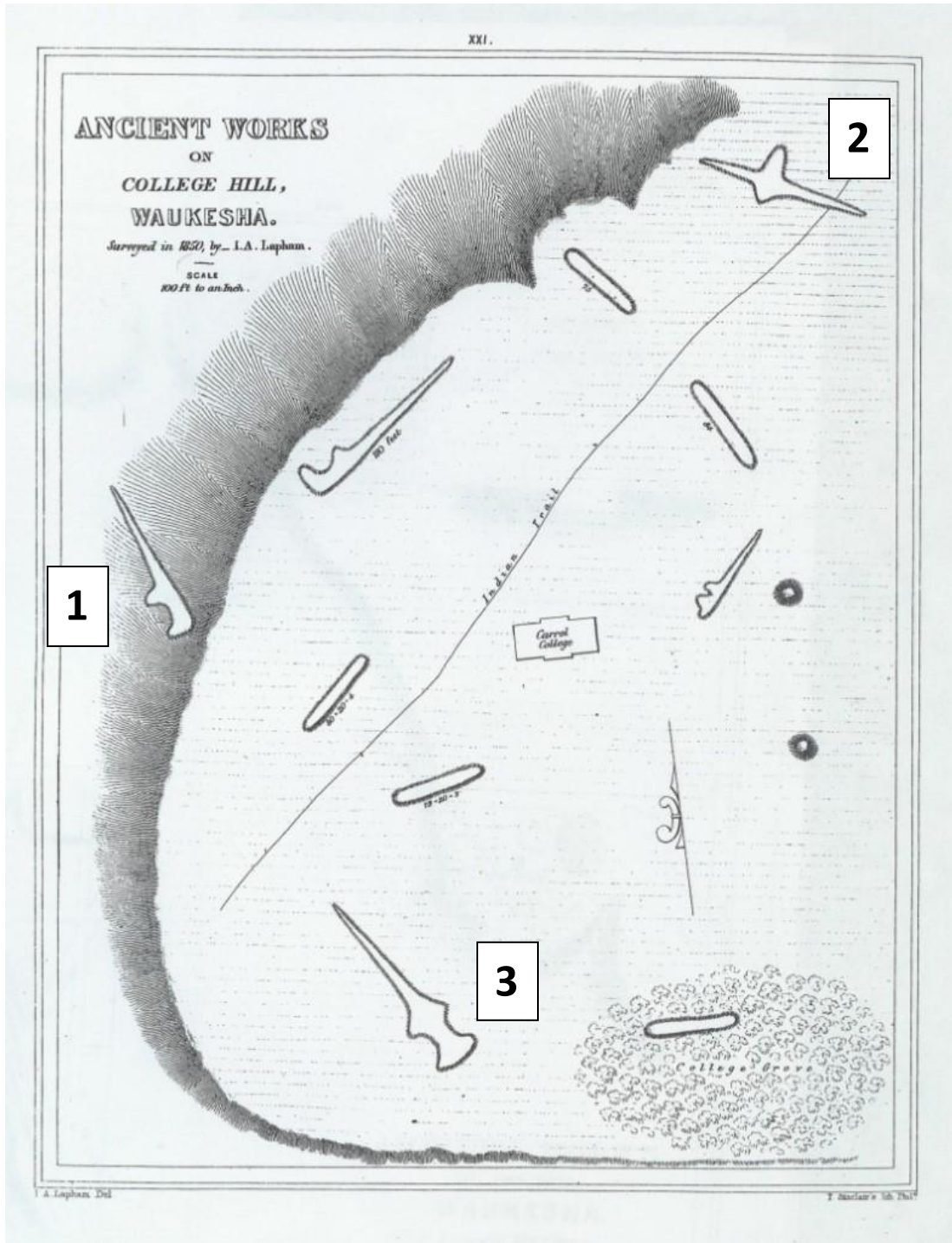
At one time there were hundreds of mounds in Waukesha County. Today, most effigy mounds are gone because they were destroyed to make room for roads, cornfields, or houses. Luckily, people like Increase Lapham made maps of places where effigy mounds were located.



Effigy Mounds – Carroll College

Increase Lapham surveyed Wisconsin mounds in the 1850s including those found on what is now the Carroll College campus in Waukesha. Below is a map he made of the mounds he surveyed. He drew maps and diagrams of effigy mounds from all over Waukesha Co.

DIRECTIONS: Use the **Effigy Mound Fact Sheet** to answer the questions about the map below.



Name _____

Date _____

Effigy Mounds- Questions

- 1.)** How many total mounds are pictured on the map?
- 2.)** What is an effigy mound?
- 3.)** How many mounds are effigy mounds?
- 4.)** What animal do you think is depicted at the effigy mound marked 1?
- 5.)** What animal do you think is depicted at the mound marked 2?
- 6.)** What animal do you think is depicted at the mound marked 3?
- 7.)** Why are there not as many mounds in Waukesha County than in the past?
- 8.)** Draw your own effigy mound. Why did you make it that shape? What can be found inside your effigy mound?