

Indian Effigy Mounds  
Smith Park.  
Doty Island  
Menasha, Wisconsin



## Doty Island

Wisconsin's residents have **treasured Doty Island** for thousands of years. Village sites located here have yielded artifacts produced during the Archaic Tradition, 3000 years ago.

The Island was a favored retreat for people of the Effigy Mound culture, Remnants of their villages have been found south and southeast of Smith Park. Residents of the villages built a large group of burial mounds here over a thousand years ago. The mounds once stretched from this location, westward along Lake Winnebago, to Fifth Street, Neenah. More than twenty mounds were visible on the Island at the end of the 19th Century.

Doty Island was also the site of several Native American villages occupied after Euro-American Contact. The Ho-Chunk 'princess' Hopokoekan (Glory of The Morning) and her people lived here in 1766. A second village, under the leadership of Hoochoop (Four Legs) was occupied between 1800 and 1832.

At that time, a visitor to what is now Smith Park would have looked southwestward over an expanse of cornfields and pre-contact burial mounds. The main Ho-Chunk villages were located on the shore of Lake Winnebago, to the southeast of the park.-

## The Smith Park Mounds

The only surviving mounds on Doty Island are preserved here in Smith Park. The three effigy mounds once formed the northeastern portion of the Doty Island mound group. The effigies are in the shape of long-tailed animals. These animals are sometimes called "panthers", but more likely represent Water Spirits prominent in Native American belief systems. A fourth animal effigy was located in the park southwest of the surviving mounds. No surface indications of the fourth mound survive today.

## Who Built the Mounds?

Mounds were constructed in Wisconsin for many centuries, beginning around 500 B.C. and ending after European contact. During this time many different cultures arose in Wisconsin. Archaeologists believe that different peoples shared the custom of mound-building, just as many groups world-wide place inscribed stones over graves today.

Archaeologists call the builders of the mounds in Smith Park the Effigy Mound people. The Effigy Mound people lived across most of Wisconsin, and portions of Illinois, Minnesota and Iowa. They were the first people to use bow-and-arrow hunting technology in Wisconsin, and were the first to grow corn. Some archaeologists believe that the Ho-Chunk and the Ioway may be their descendants.

Effigy mounds, like those in Smith Park were built across Wisconsin between

AD 700 and AD 1100. Effigy mounds are usually located on high ground near bodies of water, near the summer village of their builders, .

### **What Were They. For?**

Mounds **were** built **to serve** a variety of purposes. Most were constructed to cover The graves of the dead. Because of Wisconsin's harsh winter weather, it is - almost certain that mounds were built in warmer weather; when scattered groups . congregated to socialize, gather food and materials to prepare for the next cold season, and conduct important ceremonies.

Archaeologists believe that mound-building played an important ceremonial role apart from the use of mounds as mortuary features. Excavations in similar mounds at other sites have uncovered evidence of rituals involving fire and water.

Effigy mounds were built in many shapes. They appear to represent birds, animals and spirit beings that were important to their builders. The animals represented . play prominent roles in Native American religion and clan systems.

As you walk among the mounds, please remember that you are visiting a cemetery. Wisconsin's burial mounds are built of soil- and are easily eroded. We ask that you refrain from walking directly over the mounds. Your cooperation will help us **to** . preserve these irreplaceable features of Wisconsin's landscape.