

City of Madison Landmarks Commission  
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (1)

<b>Name of Building or Site</b>	
<b>Common</b> Merrill Springs Mound Group	<b>Historic (if applicable)</b> Merrill Springs Mound Group II
<b>Location</b>	
<b>Street Address</b> 5030, 5034, 5040, 5042, 5046, 5053 and 5101 Lake Mendota Drive	<b>Aldermanic District</b> Nineteenth
<b>Classification</b>	
<b>Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.)</b> Indian Mounds	
<b>Zoning District</b> R1 and R2	<b>Present Use</b> residential
<b>Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)</b>	
<b>Name(s)</b> see pages 2-3	
<b>Street Address</b> see pages 2-3	<b>Telephone Number</b> see pages 2-3
<b>Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)</b>	
<b>Parcel Number</b> see pages 2-3	<b>Legal Description</b> see pages 2-3
<b>Condition of Property</b>	
<b>Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins)</b> fair	
<b>Altered or Unaltered?</b> altered	<b>Moved or Original Site?</b> not applicable
<b>Wall Construction</b> not applicable	

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

**Property Owners and Legal Descriptions:**

(Note: Owners addresses are the same as the property's address.)

5030 Lake Mendota Drive, Madison, WI 53705

Parcel #0709-184-0131-9

Richard J. Pearson and Merry N. Pearson, 231-6736

Spring Park, Lot 8, Block 1, Section 18, T7N, R9E, part of SE 1/4 described as follows: Beginning at the Southwest corner of Lot 8, said Plat; thence westerly along North right-of-way of Lake Mendota Drive 40.6 feet; thence northerly parallel to East line of Lot 1, Block 1, said Plat 222 feet more or less to the shoreline of Lake Mendota; thence easterly along said shoreline to the Northwest corner of Lot 8, said Plat; thence southerly along West line of Lot 8 221 feet more or less to the point of beginning.

5034 Lake Mendota Drive, Madison, WI 53705

Parcel #0709-184-0130-1

Albert J. Duckwitz, 233-4066

Spring Park Lot 1, Block 2, Section 18, T7N, R9E, part of SE 1/4 described as follows: Beginning at the Southeast corner of Lot 1, Block 2, Spring Park; thence easterly along southerly line of Block 2 10 feet; thence northerly parallel with easterly Lot line of Lot 1 to the shoreline of Lake Mendota; thence westerly along the shoreline said Lake to Northeast corner of Lot 1; thence southerly along easterly line of Lot 1, to the point of beginning.

5040 Lake Mendota Drive, Madison, WI 53705

Parcel #0709-184-0129-4

John R. Duckwitz, 238-1651

Spring Park, Lot 2, Block 2.

5042 Lake Mendota Drive, Madison, WI 53705

Parcel #0709-184-0128-6

Charles A. Gates, 233-6106

Spring Park, Lot 3, Block 2, except beginning at the Northwest corner of said Lot 3; thence Southeast along lakeshore 16 feet; thence Southwest to a point 117 feet South of Northwest corner; thence North 117 feet to the point of beginning.

5046 Lake Mendota Drive, Madison, WI 53705

Parcel #0709-184-0127-8

Nicholas M. Margetis and Mary Margetis, 233-2140

Spring Harbor, all of Lot 39, Block 1, part of Lot 38, Block 1, described as follows: Beginning at the Northeast corner of said Lot 38; thence northwesterly along Mendota lakeshore 16.5 feet; thence southwesterly in a straight line to the Northwest corner of Lot 39; thence easterly 50 feet to the Northeast corner of Lot 39; thence northerly along East line of Lot 38 to the point of beginning, also part of Lot 3, Block 2, Spring Park, described as follows: Beginning at the Northwest corner of Lot 3; thence

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**LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)**

Southeast along Mendota lakeshore 16 feet; thence Southwest to a point on westerly line of Lot 3, 117 feet South of Northwest corner; thence North 117 feet to the point of beginning.

5053 Lake Mendota Drive, Madison, WI 53705  
Parcel #0709-184-0801-8  
Clarice E. Gorman, 233-7977

Spring Park, part of Lots 14, 15, & 16, Block 3, Beginning 1632.15 feet North and 676.7 feet West of Southeast corner of Section 18; thence West 156 feet to West line of Block 3; thence North 226 feet to South line of Mendota Avenue; thence easterly along South line 160.5 feet; thence South 179.4 feet to the point of beginning.

5101 Lake Mendota Drive, Madison, WI 53705  
Parcel #0709-184-0706-0  
Catharine A.M. Conley, 238-7721

Part of SE 1/4 Section 18, T7N, R9E, commencing at intersection of West line of Risser Road and South line of Mendota Drive; thence South along West line of Risser Road 192.5 feet; thence North 83°16'W 84 feet; thence South 00°23'E 11 feet; thence South 89°11'W 36.8 feet; thence North 213.5 feet to South line of Mendota Drive; thence easterly along South line of said drive to the point of beginning.

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

*Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance.*

The Merrill Springs Mound Group is composed of two sites, a mound group site and a village site. The district is located among single-family residences on the crest of a ridge overlooking Merrill Creek to the west and Lake Mendota to the north. The creek joins Lake Mendota approximately 400 m northwest of the site. Historically several springs were reported in the area, with three major springs located in the vicinity of present day Spring Harbor at the mouth of Merrill Creek (Foote and Henion 1890). The Merrill Springs Mound Group II (47 DA 699), originally reported to contain 13-20 mounds, now contains only six, possibly eight, visible mounds interspersed between the residences and outbuildings along Lake Mendota Drive. 47 DA 191 is a village site described by C. E. Brown in 1935 (Brown, mss), and is located between the Merrill Springs Mound Group II and the Black Hawk Country Club Mound Group (47 DA 131). This site was purported to contain pottery, lithic tools and debris as well as hearths and refuse pits. In 1888, Lewis also placed garden beds in the area (Lewis, mss). The Merrill Springs Mound Group can be dated to the late prehistoric and early historic time periods of Wisconsin, specifically, Late Woodland and Historic Winnebago.

Merrill Springs Mound Group II

The Merrill Springs Mound Group II is one of four groups in the historic Merrill Springs resort area. These four mound groups contained approximately 50 mounds and were situated along a mile of Lake Mendota shoreline. Many of these mounds are now destroyed or badly damaged.

T. H. Lewis first surveyed in the Merrill Springs resort area in 1888, placing all the mounds under the name Four Lakes Mounds, but describing them by section number. Those mounds in Section 18 have since been designated Merrill Springs Mound Group II. Lewis placed upwards of 20 mounds in the group: conicals, linears, bear effigies, bird effigies and a rare set of connected conicals and linears. He also mapped a series of springs and garden beds visible in the area at the time (Lewis, mss). In the late 1880s, Stephen D. Peet also surveyed the Merrill Springs resort area. His map mixed a portion of the Merrill Springs Mound Group II earthworks with some of those later identified with the Black Hawk Country Club Group (47 DA 131) (Peet 1898). On his map, Peet placed as conical/linear alignment similar to that described by Lewis. Comprehensive surveys done by A. B. Stout in 1905 and C. E. Brown in 1910 divided the mounds in Merrill Springs Resort Area into four discreet groups using the surrounding topography: the Black Hawk Country Club Mound Group, the Merrill Springs Mound Group II, the Spring Harbor Mound Group and the Mendota Creek Mound Group (Brown, mss; Stout, mss). Stout's map for Merrill Springs II shows two conicals partially destroyed (Figure 2). Brown comments on "a chain of mounds" which may be the same conical/linear alignment seen by Lewis and Peet. Brown also mentions that a conical and bear mound had been partially destroyed and that several human bones had been taken out of two other conicals in the early 1890s. Unfortunately, detailed dimensions of the mounds and descriptions of the burial excavations have not been found.

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**LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (5)**

In the Winter of 1989-1990, a crew from the State Historical Society returned to the area to reassess the status of the Merrill Springs Mound Group II. Only one complete mound and portions of others are visible on the surface (Figure 2). The mound group is located in a housing development and construction of houses, garages, patios, and other structures have threatened the group. The area is a mosaic of disturbed and undisturbed land. Out of the original 13 to 20 mounds, six, possibly eight, mounds remain. These surviving mounds lie in front of or between modern buildings and roads.

Descriptions of the eight remaining mounds follow. Measurements are approximate since edges of many of the mounds blend in with the natural contours of the landscape, or have been truncated by construction.

**Mound 1 Linear.** This mound is a slightly curved linear mound. Approximately half of the mound remains, the rest destroyed by construction of a house and sidewalk. The portion remaining measures approximately 15 feet x 25 feet. A small sign was erected on the top of the mound by the landowners, signifying its aboriginal origin.

**Mound 2 Bear Effigy.** Mound 2 is a partial effigy. Only a small portion of the original mound remains, measuring approximately 37 feet x 25 feet. In 1905, the bear was estimated to be approximately 80 feet in length; most of the mound was removed during construction of Lake Mendota Drive and a driveway. It is possible that a small portion of the rear end of the mound remains under dense shrubbery on the west side of the driveway. A looter's hole can be seen in the portion east of the driveway.

**Mound 3 Bear Effigy.** Almost three-quarters of this mound remains. A portion of the head and front leg were removed during construction of a garage and house. The remaining portion measures approximately 68 feet in length and 31 feet wide at its hind leg.

**Mound 4 Linear.** This is a portion of a longer linear mound, most of which was destroyed during the construction of a house. The remaining area measures approximately 27 feet x 19 feet.

**Mound 5 Conical.** Mound 5 is the remains of a conical mound which is estimated to have been 26 feet in diameter. Most of the mound was destroyed during construction of Risser Road.

**Mound 6 Conical.** This is a complete conical mound, measuring approximately 29 feet in diameter and 2 feet high, and is the most pronounced of the group.

**Mounds 7 and 8 Conicals.** Portions of these two mounds may still exist. At this time, oak trees, growing on very small dirt moundings, are situated where Brown and Stout place these earthworks. It is not possible to determine the status of these moundings without subsurface investigation. Future research in the area should concentrate on determining the status of these moundings. At present, they are **not** included in the district boundaries.

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Village Site (47 DA 191)

Brown's notes on the investigations conducted in the Merrill Springs resort area in the early 1900s clearly indicate that the Black Hawk group and the Merrill Springs Mound Group II are separated by the presence of an extensive prehistoric village containing Woodland projectile points as well as animal bone, lithic debris and hearth features (Brown, mss). As this village is said to abut the mound groups, it is likely that village material is present within the boundaries of the nomination as drawn. Future research should focus on locating any remaining village site materials. When they are defined fully, the district boundaries can be extended to include the new findings.

In addition to the prehistoric aboriginal habitation of the area, Brown also mentions historic Winnebago occupation there as well.

In the early days of settlement of this vicinity, small bands and family groups of Winnebago Indians frequently camped along the brook and in the vicinity of the big Merrill Spring and other springs in this vicinity, on the site earlier occupied by their prehistoric mound-building predecessors. They regarded the spring as a medicinal spring, one having curative properties for many ills of human kind. Being a "spirit spring" offerings of various kinds were cast into its waters. Years ago, in improving the spring, deer antlers and some other animal bones were fished out of its bed.

The Winnebago name for this locality, according to the late Oliver Lemere, grandson of Oliver Armel, the early Madison fur trader, was Ma ka ma i, meaning "medicine springs". This name he obtained from an Old Indian whose father camped here in the (18)50's (Brown mss, parentheses added).

Lewis' notes on garden beds in the vicinity of the mound groups may be related to the Winnebago occupation.

Additional information supporting historic use of the Merrill Springs resort area is found in the notes and maps of Orson Lyon, surveying for the Government Land Office in 1834. Lyon mapped an Indian trail which follows along the southern shore of Lake Mendota past the Merrill Springs resort area (U. S. General Land Office 1834). No mention was made of an Indian encampment, however, since the survey was conducted in the month of December, it is unlikely that a large encampment would be present on the lakeshore at that time of year. Brown states that at the turn of the century, a portion of the trail was still visible in the Merrill Springs resort area (Brown, mss; 1910).

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (7)**

<b>Original Owner</b> People of the Late Woodland Stage Effigy Mound Tradition	<b>Original Use</b> ceremonial and funerary
<b>Architect or Builder</b> People of the Late Woodland Stage Effigy Mound Tradition	<b>Architectural Style</b> not applicable
<b>Date of Construction</b> ca. 800-1100 A.D.	<b>Indigenous Materials Used</b> not applicable

**List of Bibliographical References Used**

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1986 The Emergence of Horticultural Societies in Wisconsin. In William F. Keegan (ed.) Emergent Horticultural Societies of the Eastern Woodlands. Southern Illinois University of Carbondale, Center for Archaeological Investigations Occasional Paper No. 7.
- Benn, David  
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continued on page 5

**Form Prepared By:**

**Name and Title**

Cynthia Stiles-Hanson, Assistant State Archeologist and Katherine H. Rankin, Preservation Planner

**Organization Represented (if any)**

State Historical Society of Wisconsin and City of Madison

**Address**

P.O. Box 2985  
Madison, WI 53701-2985

**Telephone Number**

266-6552

**Date Nomination Form Was Prepared**

February 10, 1993

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*Bibliographical References Used Continued*

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- Foote, C.M. and J.W. Henion  
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- 1984 Some Views on the Archaeology of the Driftless Zone in Iowa.  
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City of Madison Landmarks Commission  
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (9)

***Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:***

The Merrill Springs resort area contains the remains of a once extensive array of linear, conical and effigy mounds which stretched along a portion of the southwestern shoreline of Lake Mendota. Of an approximate 50 mounds in four discreet groupings, less than half survive and many of those in damaged condition. The Merrill Springs Mound Group contains one of the four groups of the historic resort area, although only six, possibly eight, of the original 13 to 20 mounds remain. Aboriginal mounds derive their significance primarily from their shape and location within the group, not just from the deposits which may be present within them. For this reason, the extant mounds maintain sufficient integrity to yield significant information on the Late Woodland Stage of Madison's prehistory. Further research may also reveal substantial Woodland aboriginal habitation deposits and historic Winnebago habitation deposits reported in the late 19th and early 20th century investigations of the area.

Effigy mound groups like Merrill Springs are generally dated to the Late Woodland Stage circa 650-1200 A. D. Many believe, however, that the effigy mounds themselves were built during a rather narrow time span of AD 800-1100 (Benn 1979). Effigy mound groups are believed to have functioned as ceremonial centers for the periodic reinforcement of kinship ties and belief systems of individual Late Woodland social groups. Dane County once contained over 1,000 mounds in approximately 115 locations or centers that are attributable to the Late Woodland Stage (Peterson 1979:53). This figure includes at least 289 effigy mounds. Most of these were found in the four lakes area around Madison and most have been destroyed by agricultural practices and urban expansion. Approximately 200 mounds in approximately 50 locations remain. These include less than 60 effigies.

The mound groups located at Merrill Springs lie along the Lake Mendota shoreline in close proximity to a series of springs in the area. Interspersed among the four mound groups are habitation sites containing artifacts dating to the Late Woodland period. The collection of habitation and mound sites together indicates an intense use of the area around the springs for religious/ceremonial as well as domestic/subsistence activities.

The Merrill Springs Mound Group has the potential to yield important information on the Late Woodland Stage. For example, ceramics and other artifacts can help clarify the nature of the Late Woodland sequence. This is important, since it has recently been proposed that not all Late Woodland populations participated in the construction of effigy mounds (Salkin 1987). Charcoal and other organic material associated with ceremonial activities can provide radiocarbon dates that will further refine the temporal span of mound construction. Recently, the role of maize horticulture in Woodland Society has been a research issue (Arzigian 1986). Since these types of mounds frequently contain burials, analysis of teeth and bone chemistry can provide insights into diet of the Effigy Mound people.

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However, in light of the fact that mounds are now protected as burial places under Wisconsin state law, it is relevant to point out that significant information concerning Late Woodland peoples can be gained from Effigy Mound groups, such as Merrill Springs through non-destructive studies. Clark Mallam has studied the location and arrangement of Effigy Mound groups as well as Effigy Mound types in Iowa and has gained some insights into Late Woodland social systems and ideology as a result. By analyzing the geographical distribution of Effigy Mound types, for example, he was able to determine that a number of separate social groups were responsible for Effigy Mound construction in northeastern Iowa (Mallam 1976).

In a more recent essay, he suggests that the meaning and function of Effigy Mound groups can be addressed through such analysis aided by ethnographic analogy. He observes, for example, that Effigy Mound groups tend to be located near zones of predictable and annual occurring resources. This suggests to him that a complex predictable and annual occurring resources. This suggests to him that a complex set of ideological, social, political, and economic relationships may be involved in mound construction. He suggests that mounds "are not so much burial sites as they are metaphorical expressions about the idealized state that should exist between nature and culture—balance and harmony" (1984:19). In his view, the Late Woodland people were expressing their "cosmological convictions" by "sacralizing the earth" through the construction of mounds.

...in other words, they consecrated the mosaic environment with its varied resources and ecological relationships by defining it as sacred space. If the rhythm—balance and order—of this region could be maintained, the resources on which humans depended would continue. In this sense, mound building may be perceived as an ongoing world renewal ritual, a sacred activity humans entered into in order to insure regular and consistent production of natural resources. (1984:19)

Mapping of mound groups and mound alignments have convinced others that they functioned primarily as calendric devices and recorded symbolic geometries. (Scherz 1987).

Similar analysis of mound group location, arrangements, and physical relationships to other sites can make substantial contributions to our understanding of Late Woodland Society in the southwest and south central part of Wisconsin.

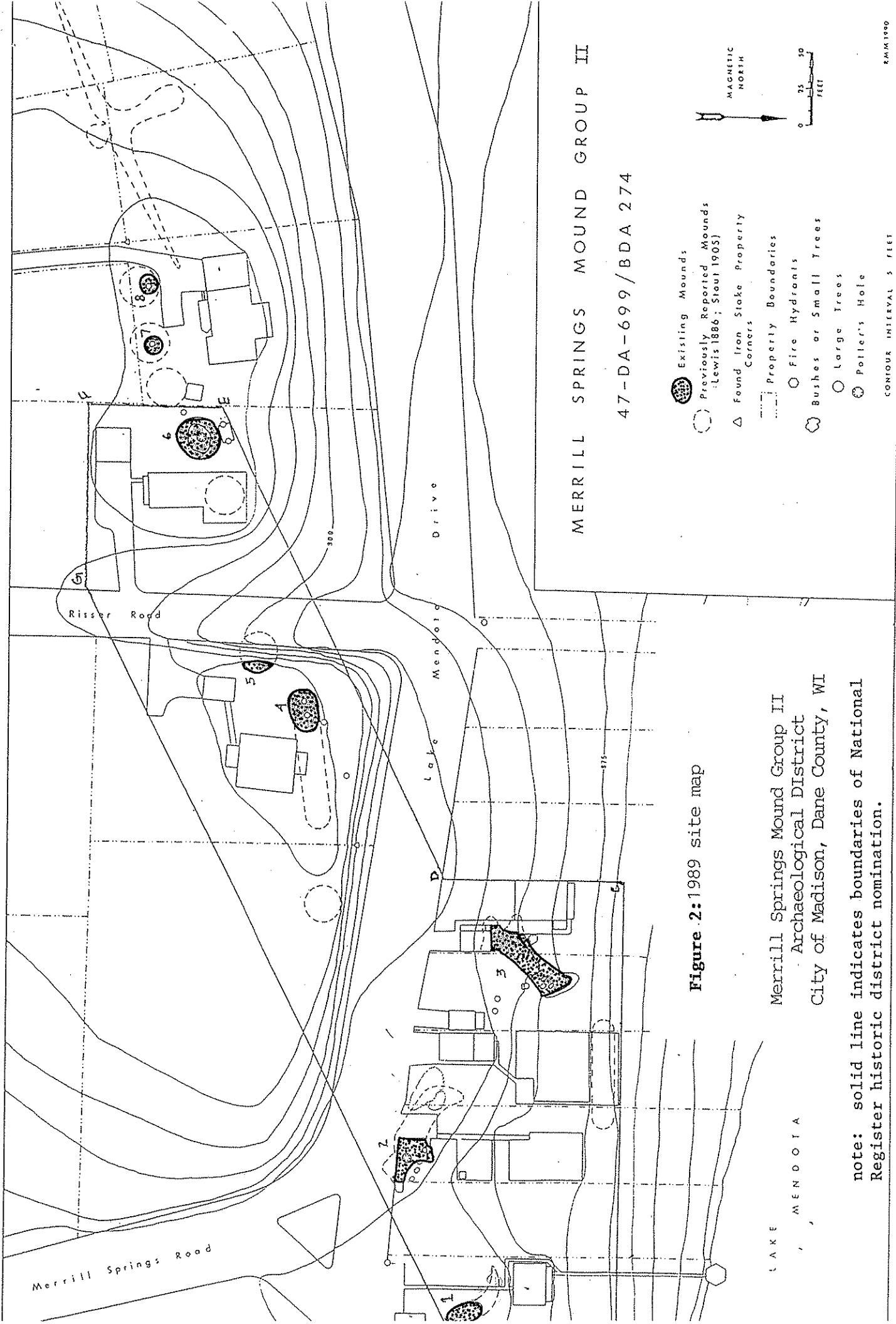
The Merrill Springs Mound Group contains a high significance in this collection since the group maintains much of its linear integrity. In other words, the portions of the mounds remaining extend almost the full length of the group originally mapped by Lewis in 1888. Future research in the area can focus on reconstructing the path of the old Indian trail as well as the garden beds, also mapped by Lewis. In addition, investigation of the area to the east of the mounds may produce evidence of the Woodland habitation reported to Brown in the early 20th century. Although urban development has destroyed much of the area, the fact that there are mounds remaining suggests that there is a mosaic of disturbed and undisturbed areas within the mound group. The areas between and

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (11)

south of the group have a high potential to yield information concerning the lifeways of prehistoric aboriginal and historic Winnebago in the Merrill Springs region.

Note: Although the parcels on which these mounds sit are nominated as a Madison Landmark in their entirety, the intent of the nomination is to protect only the mounds and their environs. Therefore, there shall be varying levels of protection depending upon how far away the construction project is from the existing mounds.

1. For the existing mounds and the area within five feet of the outlines of the existing mounds (as shown on Figure 2 as the shaded areas), there shall be no construction or ground disturbance of any type, as currently required by state law;
2. For an area within an additional five foot radius of protection (for a total of ten feet from the existing mounds), no ground disturbance shall occur unless no reasonable alternative locations exist for the new construction, as determined by the Landmarks Commission;
3. For the area outside of the ten foot radius of protection but within 25 feet of the mounds, construction and remodeling projects shall be reviewed by the Landmarks Commission to make sure that the mounds and the area within the ten foot area of protection are protected from ground disturbance; and
4. For the area outside of the 25 foot area of review by the Landmarks Commission, all projects requiring a building permit shall be reviewed and approved by the Landmarks Commission's designee, unless ground disturbance within ten feet of the mound appears likely, in which case the Landmarks Commission will review the project using the standards stated in 3. above.



MERRILL SPRINGS MOUND GROUP II

47-DA-699/BDA 274

- Existing Mounds
- Previously Reported Mounds (Lewis 1886; Stout 1905)
- Found Iron Stake Property Corners
- Property Boundaries
- Fire Hydrants
- Bushes or Small Trees
- Large Trees
- Potter's Hole

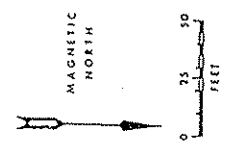
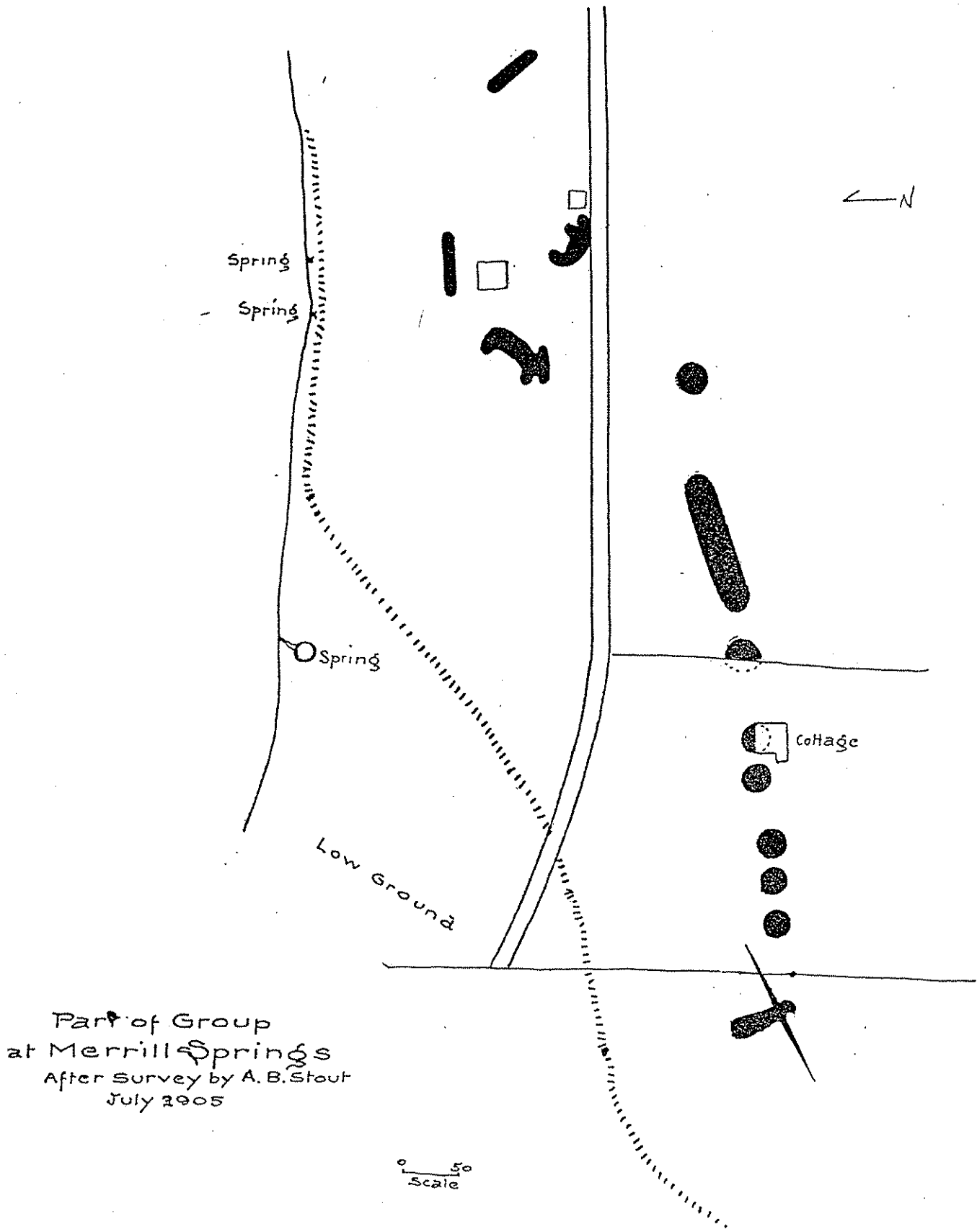


Figure 2: 1989 site map

Merrill Springs Mound Group II  
 Archaeological District  
 City of Madison, Dane County, WI

note: solid line indicates boundaries of National Register historic district nomination.



Part of Group  
at Merrill Springs  
After Survey by A. B. Stout  
July 1905

Figure 1: 1905 site map by A.B. Stout. (from CEB manuscripts)

Merrill Springs Mound Group II Archaeological District  
City of Madison, Dane County, WI