

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common Vilas Circle Bear Effigy Mound and the Curtis Mound

(2) Historic (if applicable)

II. Location

(1) Street Address Vilas Circle Park, 1525 Vilas Ave. and 1211 Garfield St.

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)

III. Classification

(1) Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.)
Burial mounds in city park and on private property

(2) Zoning District
R2

(3) Present Use
park and private property

IV. Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Name(s) Vilas Park: City of Madison Parks Division
1525 Vilas Avenue: Laurence G. Crocker
1211 Garfield St.: Daisy Hutson

(2) Street Address 215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. and as above

(3) Telephone Number
Parks Crocker Hutson
266-4711; 255-3563; 257-2767

V. Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Parcel Number
see attached

(2) Legal Description
see attached

VI. Condition of Property

(1) Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins)
good

(2) Altered or Unaltered?
altered

(3) Moved or Original Site?
original site

(4) Wall Construction
not applicable

(5) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the present and original physical construction and appearance (limit 500 words).

Parcel Number and Legal Descriptions

Vilas Circle: 0709-224-3614-6

Washington Oval, Block 30, Wingra Park

1525 Vilas Avenue: 0709-224-3604-7

Lots 4 and 5 and the North $\frac{1}{2}$ of vacated alley between
Lots 4, 5, 10 and 11, Block 32, Wingra Park

1211 Garfield Street: 0709-224-3606-3

South 50 feet of Lot 6, South 50 feet of Lot 7 and the North $\frac{1}{2}$
of vacated alley lying between Lots 6, 7, 8, and 9, Block 32, Wingra Park

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

VI.(5) Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

The Vilas Circle Bear Effigy Mound is in excellent shape today, with the exception of the rear leg which was partially amputated when street around the park was constructed. The length of the body of the effigy is 82 feet. The width of the body at its widest part is 20 feet. The front leg (probably representing both legs in profile) is 16 feet in length. The rear limb was 23 1/2 feet. The length of the head of the animal from the tip of its nose to the tip of the hump, which probably represents ears, is 24 feet.

Near the mound is a granite boulder marked with the following inscription.

Bear
(Wah-zhe-dah)
Common Type of Ancient Indian
Effigy Mound
Length 82 Feet
Marked by the Wisconsin Archeological Society
July 20, 1910

Two linear mounds originally made up the Curtis Mounds. Only one of them survives today. It was originally 84 feet long, 18 feet wide and 1 1/2 feet high. It has diminished in all of these dimensions over the years, due to landscaping and general wear. These two mounds were located only about 30 yards southwest of the bear effigy and undoubtedly these three mounds (if not more which may have been destroyed before being recorded) formed one group and are therefore being presented as a single nomination.

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner People of Effigy Mound Tradition.

(2) Original Use
Burial ground

(3) Architect or Builder People of Effigy Mound Tradition

(4) Architectural Style
Does not apply.

(5) Date of Construction
C.A.D. 500-A.D. 1500

(6) Indigenous Materials Used
Does not apply

(7) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the significance of the nominated property and its conformance to the designation criteria of the Landmarks Commission Ordinance (33.01), limit of 500 words.

VIII. List of Bibliographical References Used

1. Brown, Charles E. 1910. The State Field Assembly at Madison. The Wisconsin Archeologist, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 60-65.
2. Brown, Charles E. 1915. Lake Wingra. The Wisconsin Archeologist, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 95-100.
3. Charles E. Brown Papers, mss. Box 22. Archives-Manuscripts Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title

John R. Halsey, Associate Curator of Anthropology.

(2) Organization Represented (if any)

State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

(3) Address

816 State Street, Madison

(4) Telephone Number

262-9566

(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

March 10, 1975 and technical correction October 25, 1988 by K. H. Rankin

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

VII.(7) Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

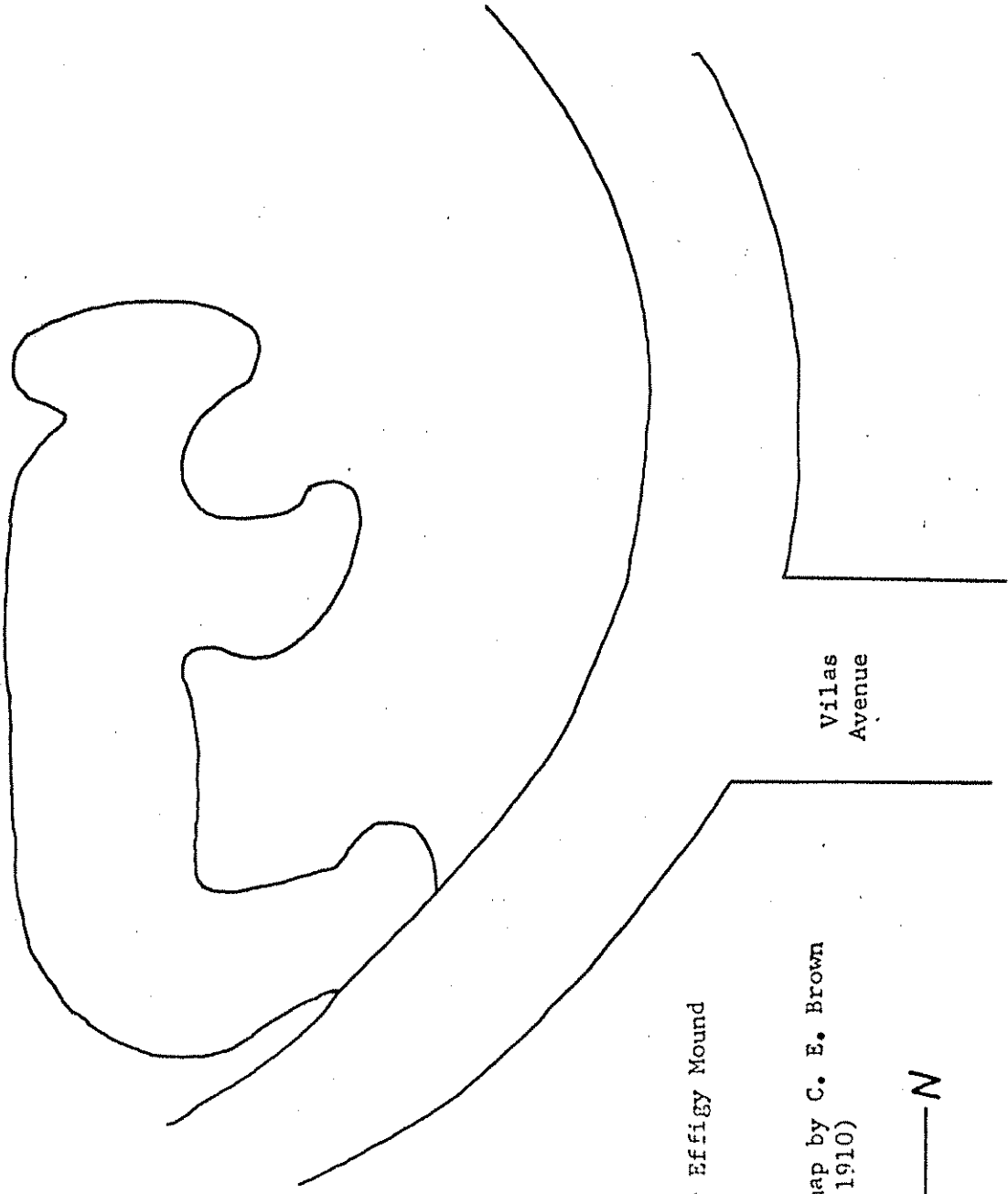
The Vilas Oval Bear Effigy Mound is one of the best examples of its class and is one of the few surviving examples of this type of effigy. There formerly were two such mounds in the Edgewood Mound Group, which lies about 3/4 of a mile to southwest, but both of these have been destroyed. Although the mound was probably constructed by the people of the Effigy Mound Tradition between A. D. 500 and A.D. 1000, it is also noted for having been the site of the discovery in 1905, of a sword with a wooden, leather and brass wire-wrapped hilt with a plain iron guard and a tapered, channeled blade. On the blade was the inscription "Pro Deo et Patria" and "Soli Deo Gloria." This sword, once deposited in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, was reclaimed by the depositor in 1915 and its present whereabouts are unknown. How this sword came to be found in a prehistoric burial mound is unknown. No formal excavation of this mound is known to have taken place. The sword was discovered through a boy's random curious digging.

The surviving Curtis mound has not been excavated. The now-vanished mound was partially destroyed when the Curtis house was constructed in 1906. In the course of its removal a burial was discovered, but no details were obtained.

These effigy burial mounds are examples of cultural belief and mortuary practice restricted almost entirely to the state of Wisconsin.

There is no known village or campsite associated with these mounds.

Vilas Circle Park



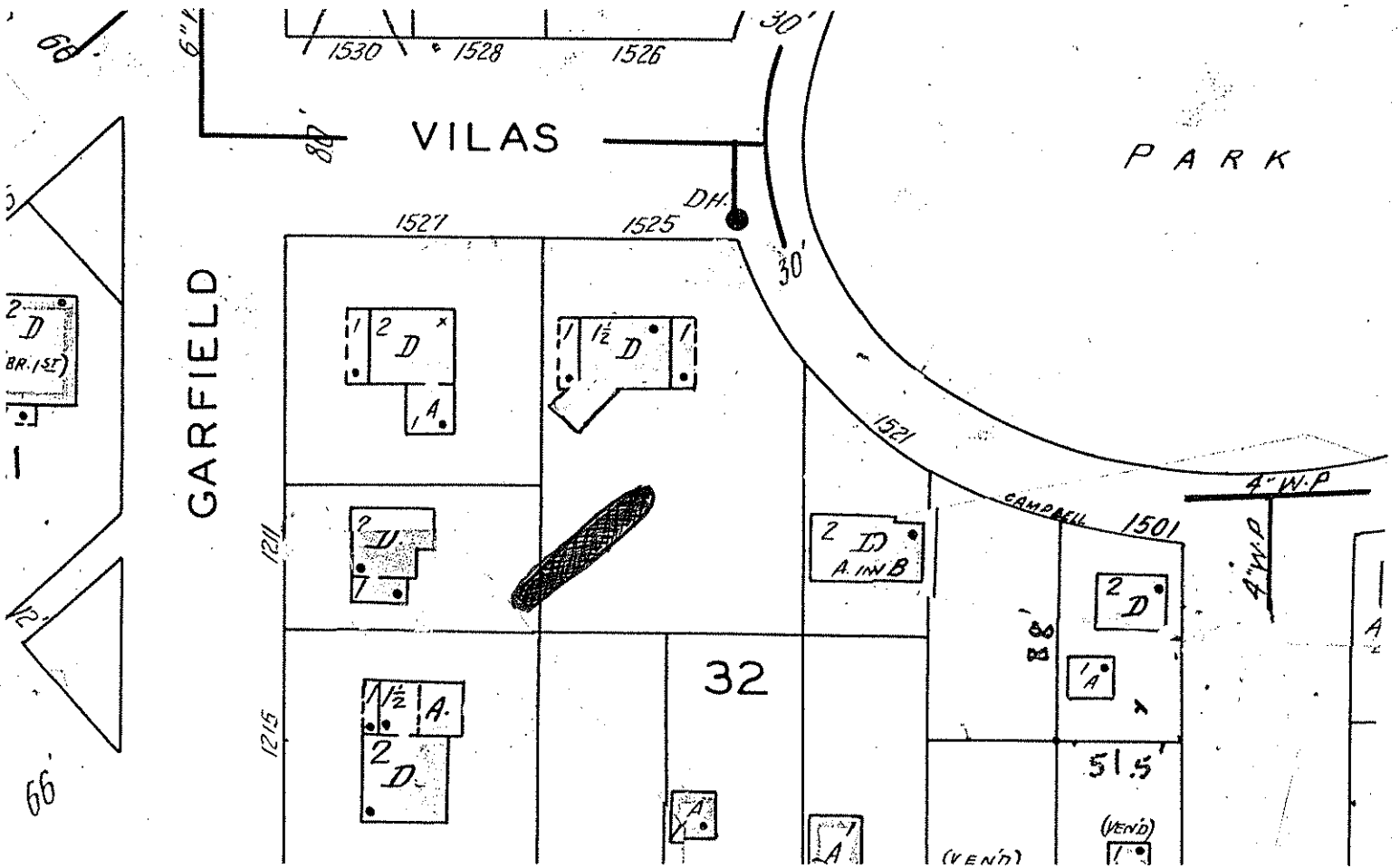
Vilas Circle Bear Effigy Mound

1" = 20'

(After original map by C. E. Brown
done on July 7, 1910)

Vilas
Avenue





Approximate Location of Curtis Mound

Not to scale

for general locational purposes only!

K. H. Rankin
10/25/88