

## Revisiting Our Past: Archaeology in the Preserve

December 2020 Self-guided Tour —Compiled by Doris Dubielzig

During this month of holidays, people embrace the traditions and places that nurtured them and their communities in years past. At this time, they often return to visit the shores of Waauksikhomik (Lake Mendota), Picnic Point and the Preserve.

The area has been beloved by humans for a very long time – at least 12,000 years! The Ho-Chunk have lived here for time immemorial and continue to do so to this day. On the December self-guided tour, I will take you to some of the places within the Preserve that you may not have noticed before.

The tour is based largely on information from the 2005 report by **George Christiansen III**, of the Great Lakes Archaeological Research Center, Milwaukee, **Archeological Investigations, University of Wisconsin-Madison Campus**. Christiansen's group examined 20 previously identified archaeological sites on the campus, and by careful study of documents, they identified six additional habitations or campsites. This tour, which has received expert editing and input from UW's Historic & Cultural Resources Manager, **Daniel Einstein**, and UW's Director of Tribal Relations, **Aaron Bird Bear**, will discuss only 4 of those areas, plus a favorite tree.

**Please do send us your photos, observations and memories of the Preserve. With your permission, we'll share them on the web!** [preservefriends@gmail.com](mailto:preservefriends@gmail.com)

Park in UW Lot 130 (2003 University Bay Drive) at Picnic Point entrance. The parking lot is free on the weekends. The UW-Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve is currently open only from sunrise to sunset each day. **Please remember that it is illegal to collect archaeological artifacts from public property.**



The UW-Madison campus is located at the geographic center of the Mound Culture (approximately 2,800 – 700 years Before Present (BP)) in North America, but there is evidence of continual habitation and use of the UW-Madison campus landscape for at least 12,000 years!

**Just inside the entrance to Picnic Point, walk to the left and cross the service road.**  
**1. Bill's Woods**

**Bill's Woods** is a special place for the Friends, as it is where we embarked on our first project. In 2001 the Friends obtained a permit to work in the part of Bill's Woods with the oldest trees, at this, the southeastern corner. **Glenda Denniston** continued to provide leadership and renewal of that permit for almost 20 years. The first job was to control the thousands of invasive shrubs, mostly buckthorn and honeysuckle, and that battle continues today, under the direction of Preserve staff. The canopy is composed of white oak, bur oak, black oak, red oak, hackberry, black cherry and shagbark hickory. Along the southeastern edge of the woods, there are a few mature Norway maple trees. Native plants and understory trees and shrubs, including dogwoods, viburnums and hornbeam, were added last year. The reintroduced spring wildflowers, including several Trillium species, trout lily, wild geranium and spring beauty are spectacular. The now diverse flora supports a diverse fauna.

**Continue with Bill's Woods on your right and the rock wall on your left.**  
**At the signpost, turn right onto Soil Pit Trail. Walk up the path into Bill's Woods. At the crest of the hill take the left fork.**

Prior to US colonization, in 1834, this area was an oak savanna, a grassland where black, white and bur oaks were the dominant trees, with marsh and wet prairie along University Bay. Before US stewardship of this land, the savanna was most likely maintained by fire ecology. Violence-backed land cessions, in the form of the 1829, 1832 and 1837 treaties with the United States, forced the Ho-Chunk to give up 10 million acres, including this region. Following acquisition by various Euro-American landowners in the mid-1800s, the timber was cleared, and the land was cultivated and used for pasture. Most of Bill's Woods is recovering from decades of plowing and use as agricultural fields, some of which were still cultivated into the 1970s.

These woods held wonderful records of past inhabitants, unearthed by **Charles E. Brown**, an archaeologist active in the first half of the 20th century. Brown was primarily responsible for saving more than one hundred Indian mounds in Madison from destruction.

In 1928, **Charles E. Brown** and his son Theodore explored the "Eagle Heights Field" that has become Bill's Woods. They reported that they found "traces of a former Indian campsite ... on the North side of the old Picnic Point Bay marsh in the cultivated fields of the University pharmaceutical garden. This land slopes gradually northward from the road and edge of this once extensive marsh, now under cultivation. We were not able to examine this entire field, a part of it being occupied by the over-wintering drug plants. We were able to find the clusters of ... scattered hearth stones of at least two and probably three former wigwams. Near them were fragments and nodules of white, red and salmon colored flint, portions of three broken flint blanks of grey, buff and salmon colored flint, and chips and flakes of the same material. These wigwam sites were 100 to 150 feet up the slope from the former marsh edge. This site has not been uncovered until this year when the [pharmaceutical] garden was extended eastward to this point [and plowing brought the artifacts to the surface]."

But the site was not formally reported to the Wisconsin Historical Society until 1975 after archaeologist **Dan Wendt** had recovered a small collection of relics from the field. Among the objects was a "fluted lanceolate projectile point". The construction of the fluted point is consistent with Early Paleo-Indian (13,000 - 10,000 years BP) technology and makes it the oldest fluted point artifact from the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. The people who made the fluted point were the earliest inhabitants of the Four Lakes area. They are believed to have arrived as the last glacier receded! Paleo-Indian sites are found at the junctions of streams or rivers with a marsh or lake. Archaeologists think these locations had strategic advantages for big game ambush and drive-type hunting and provided small game and aquatic resources for the original immigrants. Other stone tools, chert debris, and ceramic sherds found on the site are evidence of human occupation during the 2150 - 1900 years BP and 1300 - 1000 years BP time periods. We are walking on ancient ground!

**Archaeologist Dan Wendt's description of the "fluted, lanceolate projectile point."**

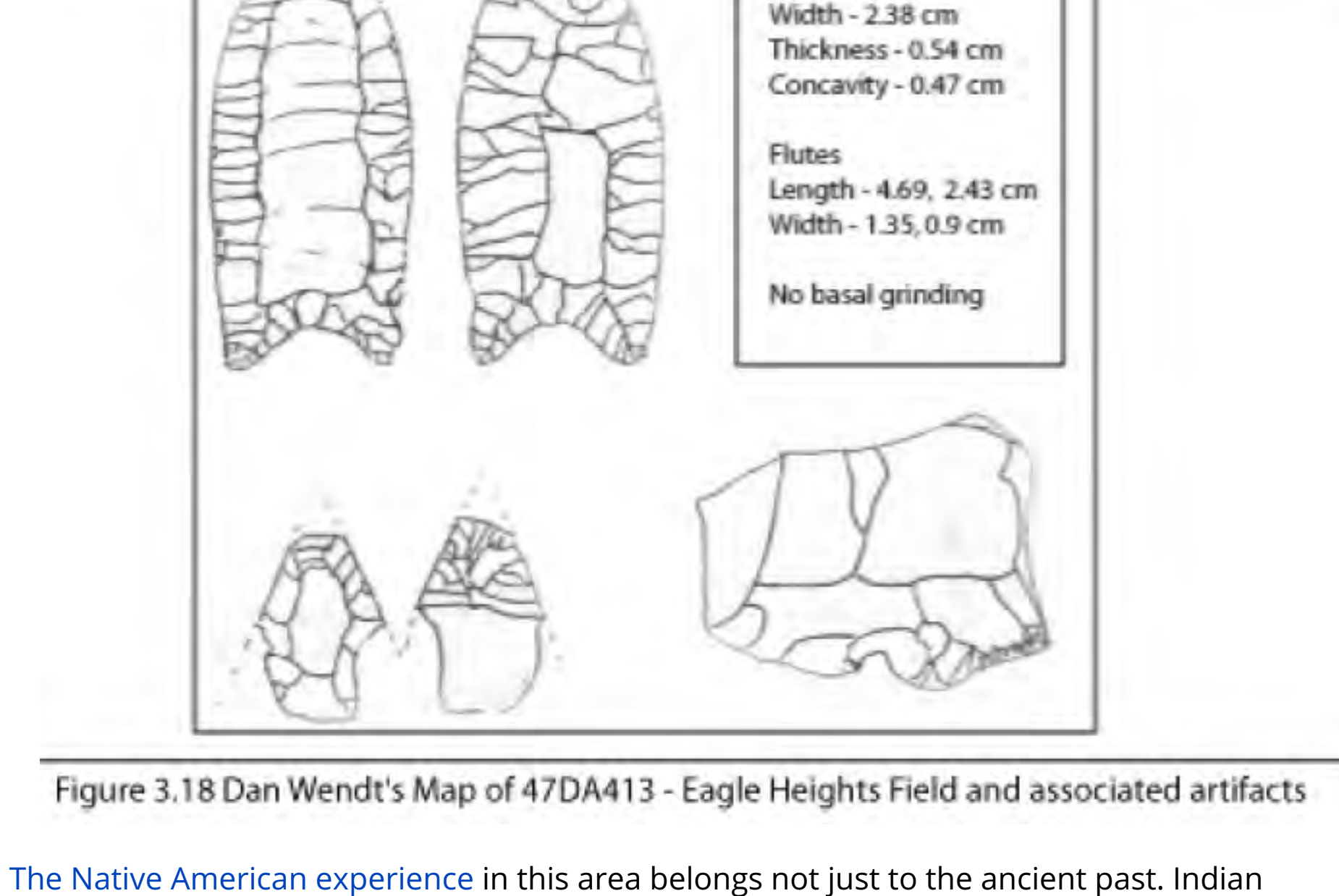


Figure 3.18 Dan Wendt's Map of 47DA413 - Eagle Heights Field and associated artifacts

The **Native American experience** in this area belongs not just to the ancient past. Indian peoples continued to inhabit the Madison area all through the period of Euro-American settlement. Today, Madison is home to many Native Americans of many tribal affiliations for whom the mounds and other archaeological features of the campus are powerful symbols of living traditions. These places continue to be sacred places that deserve to be accorded respect and reverence.

When Madison was selected to be the site of the capital in November of 1836, only thirty Euro-American immigrants were residing in what is now Dane County. During the 1840s and 1850s, population growth in Dane County was largely due to the influx of immigrants, primarily Norwegians and Germans. **Simultaneously, the Ho-Chunk were continually removed, from 1832-1874, via six military campaigns against them. Most of the immigrant pioneers were farmers seeking to plow the fertile land.**

**2. Heritage Oak**  
 As you emerge from Bill's Woods, you're greeted by the wide, spreading branches of the **Heritage Oak** on the other side of the north-south service road. In 2011, **Gisela Kutzbach** led the Friends project to restore the savanna in which the bur oak had germinated and where its branches grew wide in the open air. The Friends raised \$13,000 to pay for the removal of large undesirable trees that shaded the oak, and for purchases of savanna plants and seeds. Volunteers and Preserve staff plant and maintain the area, freeing the Heritage Oak of non-native shrubs that choke its understory. The Heritage Oak **Savanna** is a transitional ecosystem that connects Bill's **Woods** to the Biocore **Prairie**.



**Make a right and walk down the hill. Following the signs to the Biocore Prairie, take the road to the left and turn left again. At the crest of the short hill, stop at the signpost for Audio Trail #6.**

**3. Stevens and Young Farm**  
 In front of us, on the forest floor, are the remains of a brick walkway to the former residence of **Edward and Alice Young**. On the level areas up the rise, their porch overlooked Lake Mendota to the east and what is now called University Bay to the south. Edward J. Young purchased the 129-acre Picnic Point estate in 1925.

A house, owned by James Heeran, was marked at this very location on the 1861 Madison Township plat. Around 1864, Heeran sold the property to John Boeringer, who operated a refreshment and dancing hall on Picnic Point. For 25 cents, a customer could buy a roundtrip ticket across Lake Mendota to Picnic Point on Boeringer's yacht, the *St. Louis*. His business was eventually unsuccessful, and, in 1883, Boeringer sold the Picnic Point parcel to the wealthy business partner, Morris E. Fuller and his son-in-law Breese J. Stevens. Stevens established a "hobby farm" that included livestock and agricultural fields. In 1903, when Breese Stevens died, his two daughters inherited Picnic Point. One of the Stevens sisters, Elizabeth, married Dr. Reginald Jackson, Sr. and the three of them lived there for 22 years. In 1925, they sold all but 16 acres of Second Point to the wealthy lumberman and entrepreneur, Edward Young. Included in the sale were the entire Picnic Point peninsula, the upper fields east of Lake Mendota Drive, Bill's Woods, and Second Point Woods. Edward and his bride, Alice, remodeled the old farmhouse into a 15-room mansion, tore down the barn and outbuildings, and built a horse stable. In the late 1920s, Edward Young also directed the construction of the dramatic **fieldstone wall** at the **entrance to Picnic Point**.



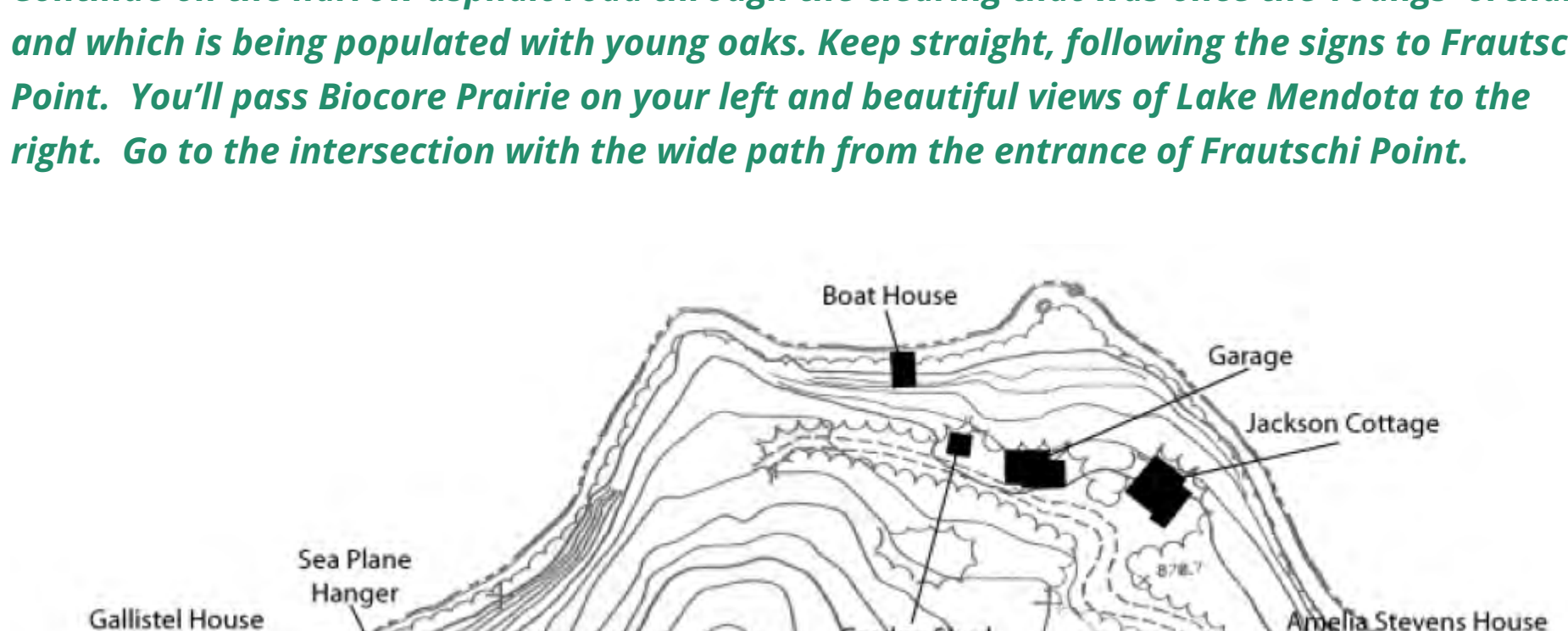
Figure 3.23: Stevens/Young House circa 1920s (CLP)

The couple developed a set of bridle trails throughout their property. On Sunday afternoons, Madison's prosperous and well-connected would bring their horses to ride the more than 5 miles of bridle paths that wound through Picnic Point (and that are now our footpaths). Later they would return to the Young's house for food and drinks, **relaxing on the broad porch that looked out across the Bay**.

But on September 4, 1935, a fire destroyed the Youngs' farmhouse. The **ferocious blaze** was visible across University Bay to the isthmus. Fortunately, the Young family escaped harm. Though the building was just up the hill from Lake Mendota, firefighters could not pump enough water to extinguish the flames. The Youngs never rebuilt the house, and in 1941, **they sold the property to the University of Wisconsin**. Of this sale, Edward Young said, "God made the land there for people to enjoy, and my understanding is that the University is going to make it as attractive to the public as possible."

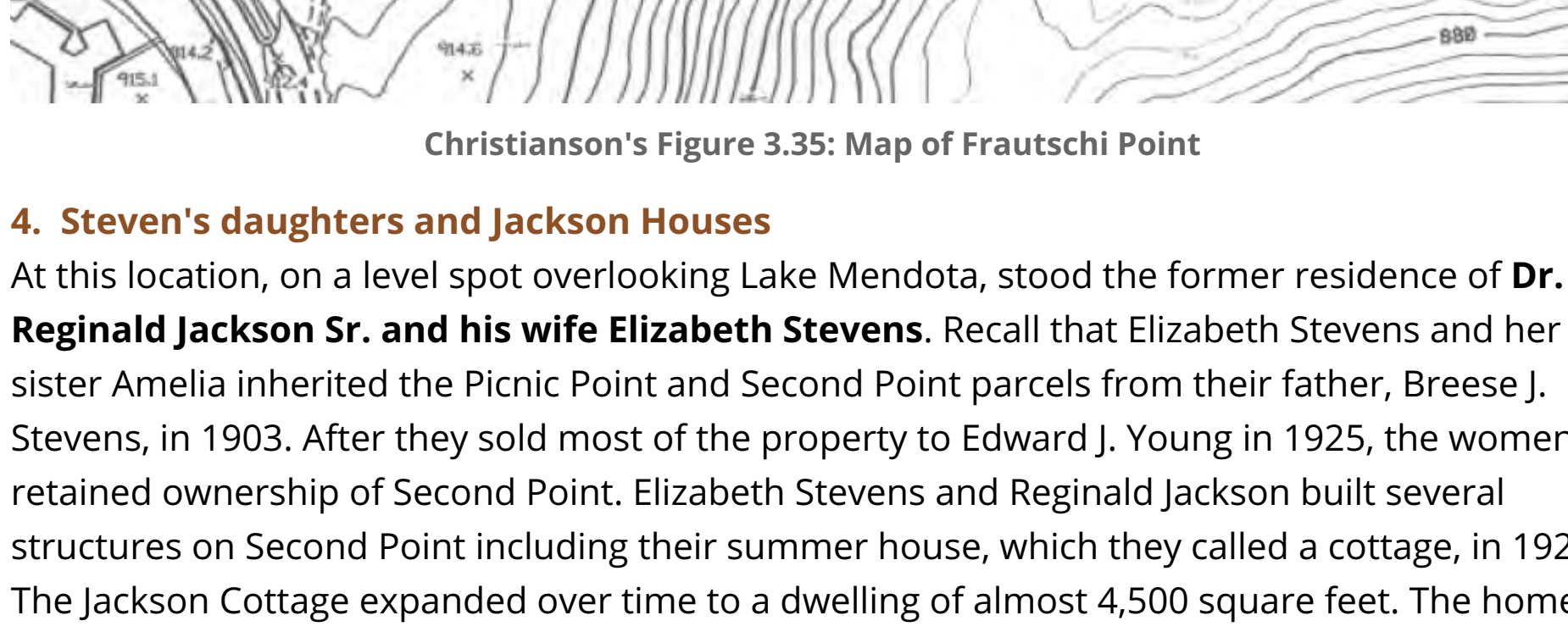
In 2004, archaeologists investigated the site of the Young house. They found pieces of debris here from human activity during 1700 – 900 years BP, in addition to artifacts of Euro-American life (nails, pieces of bottle glass, etc.).

**Continue on the narrow asphalt road through the clearing that was once the Youngs' orchard, and which is being populated with young oaks. Keep straight, following the signs to Frautschi Point. You'll pass Biocore Prairie on your left and beautiful views of Lake Mendota to the right. Go to the intersection with the wide path from the entrance of Frautschi Point.**



Christianson's Figure 3.35: Map of Frautschi Point

**4. Steven's daughters and Jackson Houses**  
 At this location, on a level spot overlooking Lake Mendota, stood the former residence of **Dr. Reginald Jackson Sr. and his wife Elizabeth Stevens**. Recall that Elizabeth Stevens and her sister Amelia inherited the Picnic Point and Second Point parcels from their father, Breese J. Stevens, in 1903. After they sold most of the property to Edward J. Young in 1925, the women retained ownership of Second Point. Elizabeth Stevens and Reginald Jackson built several structures on Second Point including their summer house, which they called a cottage, in 1921. The Jackson Cottage expanded over time to a dwelling of almost 4,500 square feet. The home was eventually occupied year-round by their son, Dr. Reginald "Reggie" Jackson, Jr. until his death in 1986. The primary access road to Frautschi Point runs through the middle of the site, and vestiges of roads, turnarounds and concrete slabs remain. Neither the Jackson cottage nor its associated outbuildings are still standing. In 2004, archaeologists found many pieces of Native American chert waste, some probably from what is now Blue Mounds State Park, in addition to lots of Euro-American broken glass in the vicinity of the former Jackson Cottage.15



When Dr. Reginald Jackson, Jr. died in 1986, the future of Second Point was in jeopardy. Jackson bequeathed the property in equal shares to the Northwestern University Medical School and the State Medical Society of Wisconsin. The 1600 feet of Lake Mendota shoreline and nearly 17 acres of beautifully wooded land made it prime real estate. Neither organization had any reason to keep this bequest, raising the very real prospect that they would sell the property to a developer. Two years later, John and Jerry Frautschi decided to surprise their philanthropist father, **Walter A. Frautschi**, with a very special Christmas gift. They donated \$1.5 million to the **University of Wisconsin Foundation**, which purchased the Second Point property and then transferred it to the state of Wisconsin.18

The Frautschi's gift in the western protected Second Point from development, provided the crucial link that tied together the western and eastern ends of the university's Lake Mendota shoreline, and made possible the eventual creation of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve. In 1989, the University of Wisconsin recognized the Frautschi family's generosity by changing the name of Second Point to **Frautschi Point**.

**Continue on the Lakeshore Path back to the Biocore Prairie. Shortly after rejoining the path along the northern edge of the Prairie, take the left fork down the hill into Caretaker's Woods and along the lakeshore. At the former Beach House, bear left onto the sandy beach path, passing Picnic Point Marsh and then the rustic toilets on your right. At the Picnic Point Narrows, make a right onto the peninsula's main trail.**

**5. On the left, behind metal posts and chain, is a large hemispherical Indian Mound**  
 While archaeologists believe that Native Americans have occupied this area for at least 12,000 years, construction of sacred burial mounds began more recently, about 2,800 years ago. **Please respect these mounds by staying on the trail.** Of the seven mounds that were on Picnic Point, six remain, and **this one (#7) is the largest.**

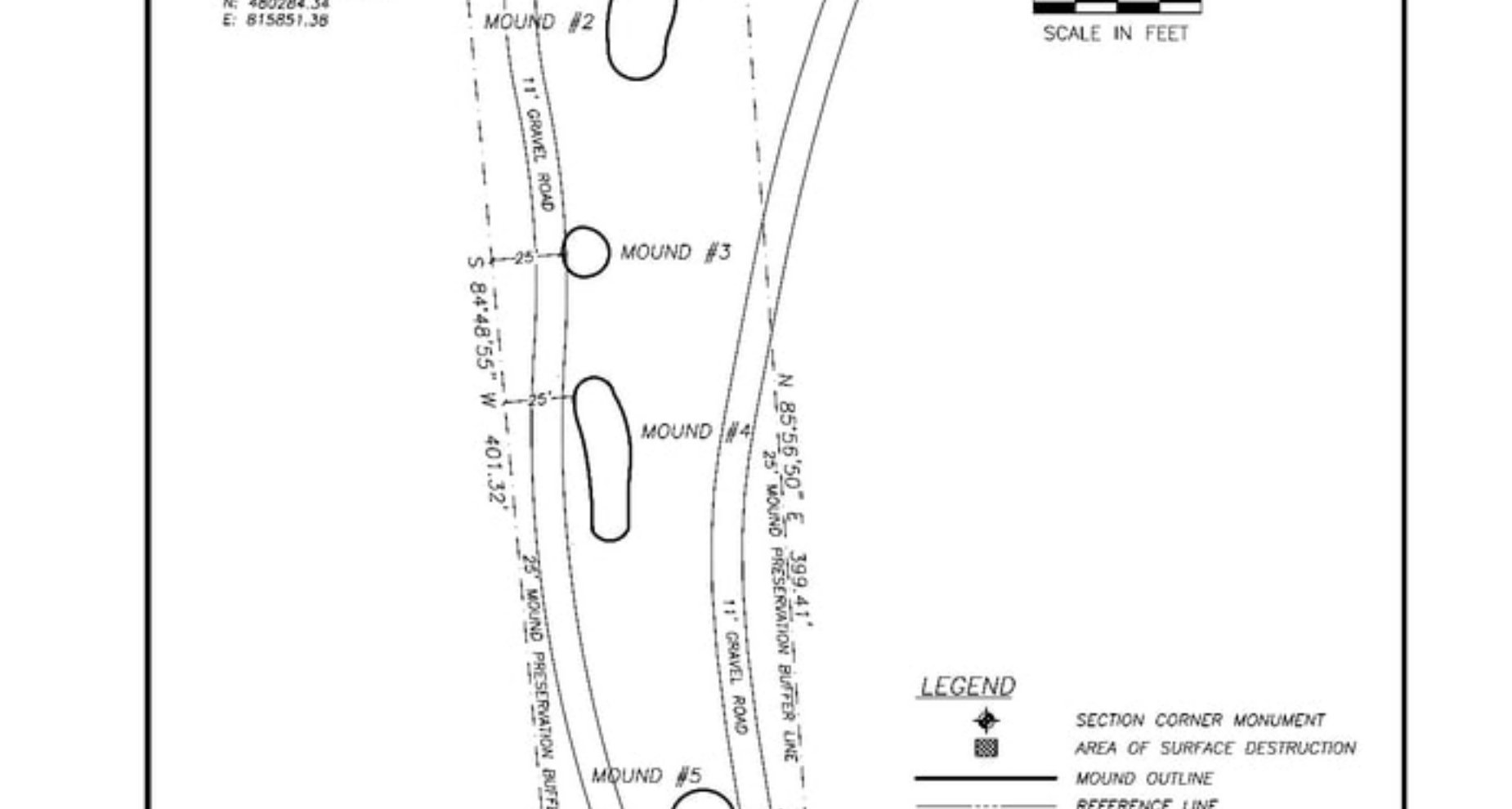
The question of who built the mounds is difficult to answer, because mounds were built over a ~2500-year period and mound construction ceased almost 200 years before the arrival of Euro-Americans. The mound builders widely adopted the bow and arrow, after it came to Wisconsin, around 1,300 years BP. Small arrow points are the most abundant projectile points found at archaeological sites occupied after that date.

The burial sites often contain one or more earthen, animal-shaped mounds. Mound shapes include birds, waterfowl, bears, canines, deer, buffalo, turtles and humans. Long "linear" mounds and small conical (or hemispherical) mounds are the most common shapes found in this part of the Preserve.

These mounds were generally low, contained few grave goods and usually contained the remains of only a single individual. The body of the deceased was consistently placed near the "heart" of the effigy, though some mounds from 1300 – 1000 years BP do not contain burial features.

Mounds are typically found situated on bluffs, ridges, bottom lands, and shorelines near resource-rich areas that were able to support temporary gatherings of large groups of people. Some mounds are found near important natural features such as islands, marshes, springs, and caves.

Walking back to the Picnic Point entrance, just beyond Fire Circle #2, on the right, are **five additional mounds**, believed to have been constructed from 350 to 2800 BP.



Locations of 5 Picnic Point Mounds

As you return to the Picnic Point entrance, note the coots, buffleheads, and Canada geese that congregate on University Bay in the late autumn and early winter. A few tundra swans have already been seen. The large birds tend to feed in the bay until it ices over and they fly east to the Chesapeake Bay.

