LONG LAKE ASSOCIATION

HISTORY SERIES No. 1

INDIGENOUS PAST

Historical facts and family stories about the early settlement on Long Lake would not be complete without acknowledgement of times before European settlers arrived. Written testimony of early settlers, personal interviews of several early Long Lake families and direct evidence reveal the existence of Native American campsites, as well as burial mounds and caches in several lake areas.

Indian Cultures

Over one-thousand years ago, Woodland Indians from Canada made there way south into the area now known as central Wisconsin. The Winnebago tribe settled in the 1600's, and moved further south as more indigenous peoples arrived in the 1700's. Chippewa, Mascouten and Menominee Indians were among the settlers of the area near Long Lake. The Menominee, who descended from the Woodland Indians, were the most numerous people in the area by the 1700's.

Two large villages existed in the area, one north of Long Lake and the other west of Saxeville. The tribes built trails leading from the Waupaca Chain of Lakes to Long Lake and south to other Springwater lakes. According to lifelong residents Dora Mumbrue and Charlotte Van Airsdale, a Native American trail ran south from Long Lake to Saxeville. One trail section still exists to this day on the property at W5020 S. Long Lake Road. According to several newspaper accounts, there is also evidence of a Native American trail, as well as very early sheep trails, on the southeast side of the lake on the Bartleson/Van Airsdale property.

In 1916, Indian caches, gardens, mounds and a cemetery were reported as found near Long Lake. Discoveries included tools, such as cord-wrapped axes, flint arrowheads, edged hand tools, and pottery painted with cultural images.

Indian villages would have consisted of semi-permanent wigwams. The structures were made from saplings, bark, animal skins and rushes.

Typical wigwam structure. (Source: https://www.travelwisconsin.com/article/native-culture)

***Attribution*: The information presented herein is based largely on the work prepared by one-time resident Joan Laabs and published in the Long Lake cookbook in 2015. Information was also extracted from the Saxeville Sesquicentennial Times published in 1978. Pictures and other references are as noted from web resources.**

Typical hand tool that would have been found in caches near Long Lake . (Source: https://www.onlytribal.com/menominee-tribe.asp)

The Menominees who settled the area raised corn and gathered wild rice, nuts, roots and fruit. They also fished and hunted for their food. Undoubtedly, Long Lake provided an important food source. Nearby Lake Poygan, was cited as an important source for collecting wild rice. Wild rice was the most important staple to the Menominee. The indigenous poeple also traded blankets and baskets with white men for food and supplies.

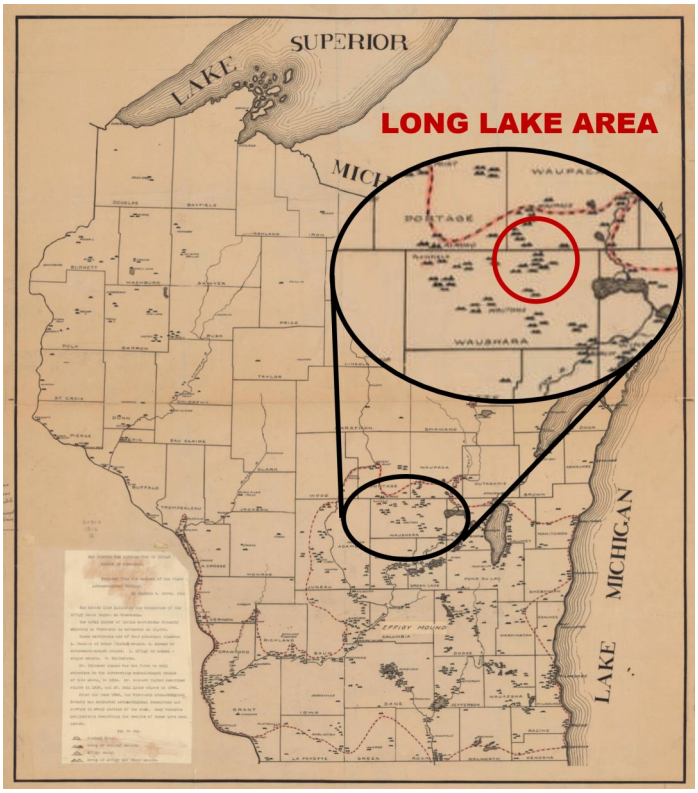
Land Designation

In 1796, a large swath of central Wisconsin land was designated "Indian Land". This included the area lying north of the Fox River and east of the Wisconsin River, including Waushara County. No white settlers could legally settle on this designated land, and if they did they were considered squatters. The local Menominee and other tribes pledged only to sell their land to the U.S. government.

It was not until 1848 that the Menominee's ceded land, including all of Waushara County, to the U.S. government. Over a two-year period the Menominee people moved onto reservation land near Keshena, Wisconsin. This opened the land around Long Lake for future settlement.

Burial Mounds

Among the most important cultural links to the Native American past are burial mounds. Detailed information in "Indian Remains in Waushara County" that was published in the Wisconsin Agriculturist, Volume 15, No. 3, in 1916, describes two groups of Long Lake burial mounds, Wilson Group and Button Mounds/Caches.



Wisconsin Historical Society map confirming the presence of burial mounds in the Long Lake area of Waushara County.

Excerpts from the 1916 report are presented here in their entirety.

Wilson Group Mounds *– South of Twin Lake, distant one mile, is Long Lake, two miles in length. This is a very clear lake and its shores are of the same general character as those of the other three large lakes of this region.*

The Record reports the presence of "Mounds on the west and northwest shores of Long Lake." The group on the west shore is that located on the farm of Mr. Wilson, in a grove south of his house. The road cuts the west edge of the group which is located on a flat, 40 feet above the water, but rather far back from the edge of the bluff. Mr. Wilson remembers that years ago the Indians occasionally camped here. There are five mounds in the group of which two conical mounds have been excavated. An oval mound is partially destroyed. It lies in the roadway and the wheel track has cut off the west end. The three oval mounds are arranged in a line extending northwest and

southeast. Each is within 15 feet of the next.

The nearest conical mound is 77 feet northeast of the largest oval. The oval mounds measure 14 x 22, 14 x 27, and 18 x 34 feet respectively and are from one to 2 feet high. The conicals are 12 and 22 feet in diameter. The highest is only 2 feet high.

Forty rods northwest of this group, in what is now a rye field, there formerly was a conical mound 16 feet in diameter and 2 feet in height. The plow has destroyed it. This was located in the N. E. J of the S. W. y of section 12. The group is in the S. W. J of the S. E. y of section 12. Both are in the town of Springwater, as are all the locations described about Gilbert, Pine, Twin, Mud and Hanawalt Lakes. Just across the arm of the lake from this group, on the same quarter section, on a sloping, sandy shore, is an Indian camp site.

From this site, over the top of the hill to the south, runs a trail, which comes out on a level plain, sandy and low, half a mile distant from the first site. Here is another large camp site and in the N. W. J4 of the N. E. y of section 13. As no other mounds were known to exist on this end of the lake by Mr. W. L. Wilson, who has lived here all his life, and on whose land those described are found, it is probable that the group and the single mound described, are those referred to by the record as, "Mounds on the west and northwest shores of Long Lake."

Burial mound typical of the type that existed in the Long Lake area
(Source: http://www.wisconsinmounds.com)

Button Mound and Caches – *No other mounds are found about this lake, save one, an oval 17 by 29 feet in size and 2 feet high, located in a scrub-oak wood. It is a long distance back from the lake on land covered with boulders. It was explored by Mr. L. A. Button on whose land it is. Nothing was found, though several large stones were found to be component parts of the mound. It is located on the S. E. J4 of the N. E. y of section 7, town of Saxeville. The major portion of Long Lake is situated in that town.*

The Record notes the presence of "Mounds on the south and southeast shore of Long Lake." Search was made for these but they were not found. Inquiry of the owner of the lands brought the information that there were mounds there, or he supposed they were mounds for there were shallow holes on the hills 10 rods south of the lake shore and 20 rods west of the road which skirts the east end of the lake.

These were found and proved to be caches or storage pits. There are three groups, none large. One group, for example, lying on a prominent knoll consists of six pits arranged in the shape of a diamond. They average five feet across and are from one to one and a half feet in depth. Near these caches are what appear to be the remains of a plot of Indian corn hills. In the sandy soil they had little chance to remain and are nearly obliterated. These pits and corn hills are in the S. E. K of the S. E. 1/4 of section 7, town of Saxeville. ◆◆◆

Many links to the indigenous past of this area, including flint arrowheads, have been found over the years in the fields and forests around Long Lake and Saxeville. If you find an arrowhead be sure to remember its link to a past when these lands and our lake were a life source to the Native Americans who resided here…