

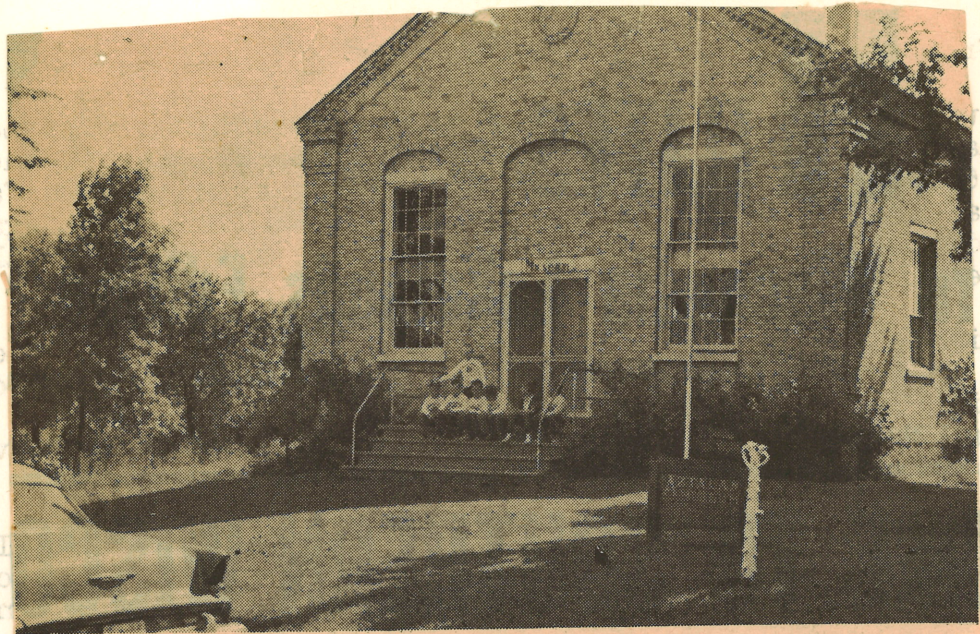
Greetings from Aztalan!

The Fourth Annual Aztalan Day is fast approaching. The Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society is making preparations for the big day, July 26, 1970. The festivities will start at noon with family picnicking at Aztalan State Park. The local 4-H Clubs will again be selling delicious home baked pie. Ice cream and pop will also be available.

An exciting program is being planned for Aztalan Day. The outstanding Indian Dancers of the Yahara Chapter of the Order of the Arrow will be here from Madison and will present several authentic, colorful dances. A distinguished speaker will deliver a timely, but brief, message. The program will begin about 1:30 P.M.

Aztalan Day does not close with the end of the program. Interesting hobby displays and fascinating craft demonstrations can be seen at the park. The Aztalan Museum, adjoining the park on the north, will be open all day. Here are exhibits of artifacts representing both Middle Mississippi and Woodland Indian cultures. A large collection of items from Pioneer Aztalan and early Lake Mills can also be seen at the Museum.

We'll be looking for you at Aztalan on July 26. Come out and enjoy a pleasant day on the banks of the Crawfish River.



Aztalan State Park and Museum, about 3 miles east of Lake Mills, are attracting many visitors already this season — some from as far away as Norway, Switzerland, Ireland and Kenya, Africa. The Lake Mills - Aztalan Historical Society maintains the museum.

To further interest youngsters in the beginnings of things in this area and to let the oldsters reminisce, the Aztalan Day celebration of last year that marked the 25th anniversary of the museum will be held again in the park.

Aztalan Day this year will be celebrated Sunday, July 28, with several speakers, including Robert Anderson, executive secretary of the Milwaukee Historical Society; Clifford Townsend, curator of the Albion Academy Museum; William Rogers, president of the Fort Atkinson Historical Society; A. G. Sayre, president of the Milton Historical Society and Herman Schmidt, Lake Mills attorney and among the earliest members of the society.

Picnicking, entertainment and music again will be part of the program. Scout and 4-H groups will participate.

The museum, open weekdays as well as Sundays, contains many collections of articles, maps and documents relating to the ancient Indian culture of this area of about 1100-1300 A.D. and to the early white settlers.

Albert Kracht, curator of the museum, and Mr. and Mrs. Elias Stroede, caretakers, are available to answer questions and arrange group tours of the buildings.

PORTRAITS

Today and Yesterday

by EFFIE LOOMER

THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 1977

NINETY-NINTH YEAR

NUMBER 17



AZTALAN

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AZTALAN

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HISTORIC LAND

THE PHOTOGRAPH
TAKEN BY ALBERT KRACHT
IN 1948 IS DEPOSITED
IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE NATIONAL
ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES
1984

Take one country boy, born and raised in Aztalan, add a strong sense of things historical, mix well with ancient Aztalanian lore, stir rapidly with several thousand school children, and you have the ingredients that made Albert Kracht the memorable figure he is in Lake Mills and Aztalan.

Mr. Kracht died three years ago, but his voice will long be remembered by all the school children who visited the ancient Indian site in those golden halcyon days, when a field trip to Aztalan was a gala holiday from school.

Kracht was a strong mover behind the group of persons who pushed hard back in the late forties to have the Aztalan site declared a state park. Their efforts were rewarded when this was accomplished in 1948.

He was born in 1889 in a farm house near the Aztalan cemetery. He lived in his early and later youth in a farm located on what is now the state park. He died in his home on the banks of the Crawfish River in Aztalan in July of 1974. He lived all his life within a half mile of the little crossroads community of Aztalan.

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He was a charter member of the Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society, which was formed in 1941. He was first treasurer of the Society and served in that post for eight years, then as president for seventeen years. He was in charge of the Aztalan Museum from the day it opened on May 30, 1942. At first he just worked there and opened it for anyone wishing to go through. Later he became curator at the museum and held this post until his death.

In his years of close association with the historical site, he told the Aztalan story over and over again to groups of visitors, primarily children from schools all over Wisconsin and Illinois. In the early seventies, the local Historical Society tape-recorded his impromptu tour guides to students, and today these are still used to tell the story of Aztalan.

He was not a polished public speaker. He was just a man who believed in what he was saying and was simply trying to imprint some historical background on the minds of impressionable young students surrounding him.

To have watched him as he talked with these youngsters was to wonder how he managed to hold their attention, when they were as fidgety as a den of cub bears in Spring. But with his calm unhurried voice, he did just that.

When listening to the tapes now, the only sound you hear besides his dry, slow voice is that of the wind blowing over the microphone, and perhaps a sudden cough from a youngster.

One of his recorded talks was given before a group of students from Lakeside Lutheran School in May of 1973 when he was 84. It may have been recorded on the site of the State Park as certain references would indicate. He speaks of the ancient Aztalan city, and how it was thought to have been occupied by an Indian culture higher than that of the Woodland Indians. The Aztalanians—the mound-builders. He speaks of the "diggings" made here in the early 1920's and again after the park became a state property. An oft repeated story—but his young audience is most attentive.

It is very fitting that the faint background noise to his voice on the tape is the sound of children's laughter and shouts. One can almost picture the kids seated in a semi-circle around him as he talked, while the remainder of the group were running off excess energy while waiting for their turn to hear the Aztalan story.

It was a rare day that Mr. Kracht was not at the museum from early Spring until late Fall. He knew more about the items contained there than anyone else did. Also, he donated many of the things that are now on display there, including an extensive arrowhead collection which he had retrieved in his years on the Aztalan site.

He was constantly on the lookout for other interesting articles to bring into the museum. An incredible amount of the pioneer history of this area is on display in the little former-Baptist church, which now serves as the museum. It is located on the corner of county trunks B and Q in the exact center of the one-time village of Aztalan.

Besides acting as a sort of official tour guide and curator, Kracht was a worker too. No job at the museum grounds was considered to be beneath him. He sweated and toiled along with the best of them in getting the site together, hopefully, to last throughout the century.

He also worked at maintaining the park itself after it became state property, and was an eager viewer of all the Indian artifacts uncovered there in the years before and since it has become a state site.

In 1968 he was one of the few state persons selected for the Local History Award of Merit given by the State Historical Society annually.

The citation reads: "For a lifetime of leadership devoted to the history and pre-history of Aztalan, this is awarded Albert Kracht."

Further in the citation, which records his interest in the mounds and park and his association with Dr. Barrett of the Milwaukee Museum back in the early twenties, there is a paragraph which speaks more eloquently than I of Albert Kracht.

"To the many adults outside the historical society to whose meetings Albert Kracht has spoken, and to the hundreds of youngsters, who have met him on field trips to Aztalan, it is difficult to separate the man from the history of Aztalan—the Indian site, and the museum in which their story is told."

This then is the grand old man of Aztalan. Gatherer of Indian arrowheads and artifacts. Dreamer of dreams. Tiller of the soil. Weaver of tales of the ancient Aztalanians. May he never be forgotten, and may the dream of ancient Aztalan restored, that he envisioned, become fact one day.

Albert Kracht became my next new subscriber. He now has 44 acres after selling a part of the farm to the Aztalan park project. Mr. Kracht bought his farm 20 years ago.

Mrs. Kracht was Anna Baumann of Watertown before her marriage 22 years ago. Mr. and Mrs. Kracht have four children, Earl, 19, Marion, a girl, 15, Lawrence, 10, and Mildred, 4. Earl is employed in a store in Lake Mills. Marion is a junior in the Lake Mills high school.

Milk from eight Holstein cows goes to the Dee-Hy powdered milk plant, Lake Mills, which is only three miles distant. The Krachts also have from 8 to 10 sheep most of the time. They got their start in sheep through Earl's participation in 4-H club work. Mrs. Kracht has 200 White Leghorn layers during the winter.

Mr. Kracht knows his Aztalan history pretty well. He told me that Aztalan was a stockaded village in the days before the white man came to these parts. Whether that village was occupied by Indians or if it dates from a pre-Indian period, he wasn't prepared to say definitely, but he believes that the stockaded city existed way back before the time of the Indians.

Richard Bennin, who is on the east bank of the Crawfish river, has owned his 21-acre place since 1906. He moved here in 1916. Mrs. Bennin was Louise Borth before her marriage 22 years ago. She is a native of Emmett township in Dodge county.

Mr. and Mrs. Bennin have five children, Mrs. Ervin Meyer, Watertown; Anita, Alvin and Elmer, at home; and Lorraine, 10, in the Tyler school.

Four of the six cows are Holsteins and two are Guernseys. Milk goes to the Milfred cheese factory. The nine hogs are Chester Whites. Mrs. Bennin has White Leghorn and Buff Rock chickens.

Visitors from West

Mrs. Bennin's brother and his wife spent Christmas and New Year visiting the Bennins. They came up by bus through Texas and the southern route to Detroit, where they purchased a new car which they drove back to their home in California.

Mr. Bennin does carpenter work and repair work as well as his farm work. He became a new subscriber to the Jefferson County Union.

Edward M. Jahn became my next new subscriber. He has a 50-acre farm of his own but also works 10 acres in addition. Mr. Jahn bought his farm here nearly 30 years ago. During all that time, he has never missed a milking, which is a record for the books. If anyone can beat that, I would like to know about it.

Mr. and Mrs. Jahn celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary last Saturday, which was Lincoln's birthday. Mrs. Jahn was Elsie Henke before her marriage. She was born on this farm, which has been in her family 54 years. Her father, Fred Henke, moved here in October, 1884, and she was born the following January. Mr. Jahn bought the farm and married the former owner's daughter 30 years ago.

Mr. Jahn has 12 head of Holstein cattle. Milk goes to the United Milk Products, Johnson Creek, which is five miles distant. Hogs for their own table use are raised. Mrs. Jahn has 125

what is known as the Tyler district. He was born here 72 years ago. His father, Jason Tyler, took the land from the government in early pioneer times, back in 1849. He came from Northfield, Vermont, a real Yankee.

Willis Tyler's mother was one of the first two white women to come to Fort Atkinson, more than 100 years ago. Her name was Elizabeth Rose. When Dwight Foster with a few other men came to Fort Atkinson in the fall of 1836, they started building some log cabins. With the work only partially finished, Foster went to Milwaukee to get his sweetheart. They were married and returned to Fort Atkinson by way of Waukesha and Hebron. From Hebron to Fort Atkinson, they had to cut down trees to get through with oxen and wagon. With Mrs. Foster on that trip was Elizabeth Rose, Willis Tyler's mother, I was told.

Mr. and Mrs. Willis Tyler have been married 49 years. A golden wedding looms above the horizon. Mr. Tyler is 74 years old. Mr. and Mrs. Tyler have two sons, Royal, at home, and Stanley, assistant professor in geology at the University of Wisconsin. He is married and resides in Madison.

Mr. Tyler believes that he is one of two persons of the second generation now living in Jefferson county where the first generation was of the early settlers, early enough to get their land direct from the government. I believe he said the other one is Mrs. McComb who resides on the Madison road just a few miles out of Fort Atkinson.

Mr. Tyler well remembers the big wheat loads and the loads of lead ore coming through Aztalan in the early days. The loads were so heavy that usually there were two teams of oxen, hitched to them.

Mrs. Tyler was Lois Hunnel, a native of the Argyle community. Her ancestry is Norwegian, Scotch and Pennsylvania Dutch. She has retained the fine hospitality for which those race are famous.

Tyler School

Tyler school, across the road from the Willis Tyler farm, carries the name of the pioneer, Jason Tyler. An enrollment of 10 follows:

8th grade, Richard Dremler; 7th, Harold Kottwitz; 6th, Mary Lou Stussburg; Lorraine Bennin; 5th, Eugene Dremler; 4th, Edward Dantuma; 3rd, Eunice Ortwig, Ivan Kottwitz, Raymond Dantuma; 2nd, none; 1st, Virginia Dantuma.

The teacher is Florence Molzahn, Watertown. She has taught this school for 13 years. She taught four years before coming here. She received her high school education at Watertown and her teacher's training at the Milwaukee State Teachers' college.

William Koppleman is clerk of the Tyler school board; Arthur Zupke, director; and Carl Thorman, treasurer. This is one school where none of the board members have any children at the school.

1938

White Leghorn layers during winter. She usually buys 200 chicks each spring.

"Do you grow peas?" I asked.

"No, I am a farmer," was Mr. Jahn's comeback. He believes in deciding for himself when to sow and when to harvest crops, he explained.

Not only did Mr. and Mrs. Willis Tyler answer all my questions about their interesting family history, the same Tyler family which included John Tyler, president of the United States, but Mrs. Tyler also invited me to stay and have a very fine dinner.

Two large volumes in the private library of this home tell the story of the Tyler family in the United States. "The Tyler genealogy leads twice to the White House and 2,000 times to the poorhouse," was the jovial way in which Mr. Tyler tried to brush the family tree off the picture. But my curiosity was at high pitch and my cross examination brought out that the second trip to the White House was that of Theodore Roosevelt's second wife, whose mother was a Tyler.

Remembers Tyler's Grave

I remember seeing the grave of President John Tyler in Hollywood cemetery at Richmond, Virginia, when I visited there nearly 31 years ago. President Tyler was of the Virginia branch of the family, while Mrs. Roosevelt was of the Massachusetts branch, as is also Willis Tyler of the Aztalan community.

The first Tyler mentioned in the genealogy was a resident of Niu-Port (now Newport), Rhode Island, in 1638, with every probability that he came over from England some years before that.

Willis Tyler has a 120-acre farm in

To 3

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Area Man Once Worked Ground of Aztalan State Park

By ROBERT L. FRANZMANN
Of The State Journal Staff

LAKE MILLS — For most of his life Albert Kracht had Aztalan — Wisconsin's foremost archeological site — pretty much to himself.

Now he shares it with more than 60,000 visitors a year.

Kracht, 82, and his father before him, once farmed much of what is now Aztalan State Park about 3 miles east of here on the west bank of the Crawfish River.

THEY CURSED the steep slopes of mysterious earthen mounds and horse-stalling strips of hard-packed clay as they plowed, "but the fields were fertile," Kracht recall.

"We used to work the fields and watch the ground between our feet for arrowheads and other artifacts," Kracht said. "It was easy behind a horse, because they went slower than a tractor."

The mounds, clay ridges, and artifacts were the remains of an Indian village that even the early settlers knew was different from the communities of Wisconsin's more-or-less native woodland Indians.

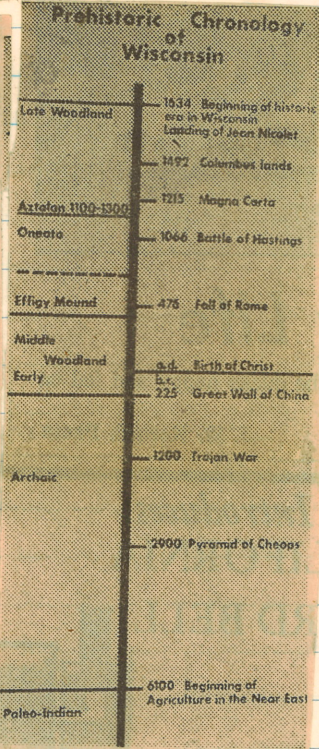
HERE, according to Joan Freeman, state archeologist, Indians of the middle Mississippi culture lived from 1100 to 1300 until the community of from 500 to 1,000 disappeared and the village burned.

A popular story is that the Aztalan Indians — named by a pioneer judge who thought their pyramidal mounds resembled the mounds of the Aztecs — were wiped out or forced to flee by neighboring Indians because of the Aztalans' cannibalistic habits.

"There is no question in our minds that they were cannibals," Dr. Freeman said, "but I'm equally certain that it was more of a ceremonial cannibalism, which wasn't so uncommon."

SHE SAID explorations of the site have turned up human bones that were "cut into pot sizes."

Archeologists are pretty well



Aztalan: Its place in history.

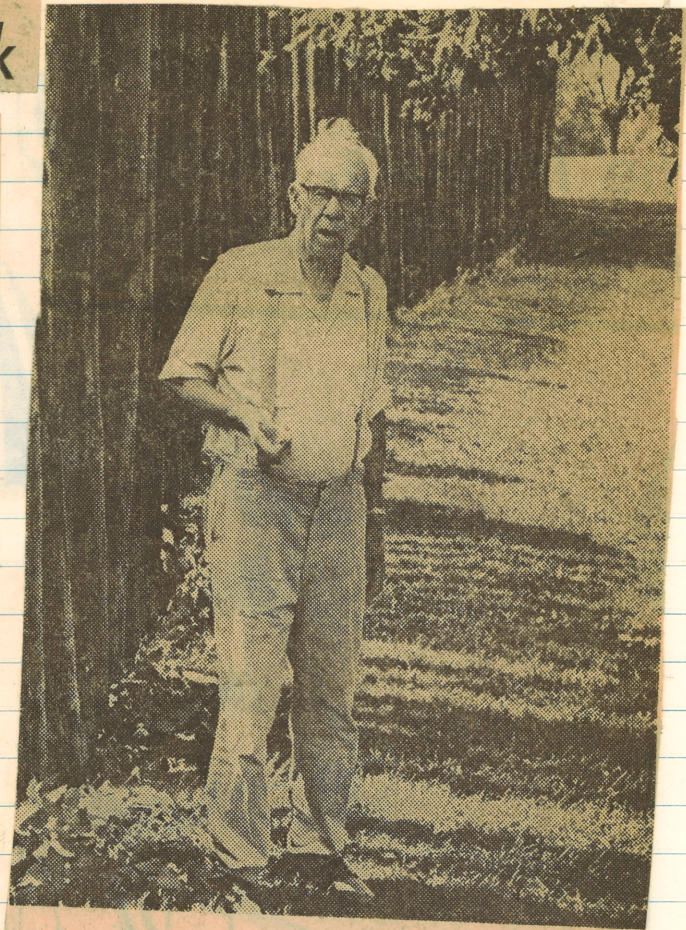
convincing the Aztalans migrated up the Rock River to the Crawfish or East Branch of the Rock from another firmly established middle Mississippi culture site at Cahokia, near East St. Louis, Ill., along the Mississippi River.

When Kracht's German immigrant parents settled in the then thriving white settlement of Aztalan, almost adjacent to the old Indian village, "nobody worried much about a bunch of Indian mounds," Kracht said.

"MY PARENTS moved down there (to the Indian site) back in 1894, when I was 5 years old," he said. "I grew up looking for stone arrowheads, spear points, pieces of pottery, and stuff like that."

"And I can remember how we cursed plowing up and over those mounds. They were steep. But the worst was the clay ridges. Some days you couldn't get a plow through them."

The clay ridges were all that remained of high, fortress-like walls the Aztalans built around their 21-acre village.



Albert Kracht shares 'his' Indian village.

Husky tamarack poles, placed tuckade-fashion around the perimeter of the village, were woven with willow branches and plastered with clay, the archeologists discovered.

YEARS OF repairs by the Indians, replacing clay that eroded off the wall, gradually built up a ridge that became even higher when the walls finally collapsed when the village burned.

By the time the first study of the site was conducted by the Milwaukee Museum in 1919-20 by Dr. S. A. Barrett, much of what the early settlers had seen already was obliterated by the plow and erosion.

"But fortunately for us," Dr. Freeman said, "the whole village, the mounds, depressions where houses had stood, and the outline of the walls still were clearly discernible in 1850, and the whole thing was mapped by Increase Lapham."

*Miscellaneous
State
Journal*

September 12, 1971

LAPHAM, a pioneer naturalist, author, and father of the National Weather Service, had a keen interest in Indian cultures. "We still are using his map of the site," Dr. Freeman said. By the time serious excavations were begun by Dr. Barrett, Kracht had moved off the

IN ITS FUTURE is a museum-like information center, according to Dr. Freeman and Dennis Kulhanek, a DNR planner, and the reconstruction of some of the Indian homes that sprawled over much of 21 acres enclosed by the stockade.

Kulhanek said there are additional mounds on the east bank of the Crawford River, and long-range plans call for purchase of lands on that side and the construction of foot bridges and historic hiking paths.

home farm and his father had sold out, but Kracht stayed nearby, taking over a small farm just to the north that also included a portion of the Aztalan mounds.

He had learned much growing up with the Indian culture at his

plow point. "People used to come and look over the site and tell me what they knew," he said.

HE COULDN'T bring himself to plow the mounds on his new farm. "I guess I sort of felt sorry for them," he said.

So that they would be preserved, Kracht turned them over to Jefferson County.

Some years later, he was instrumental in forming the Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society, which promptly opened a museum in a historic church near Aztalan and pressured the State Legislature to purchase the Indian village for a state park.

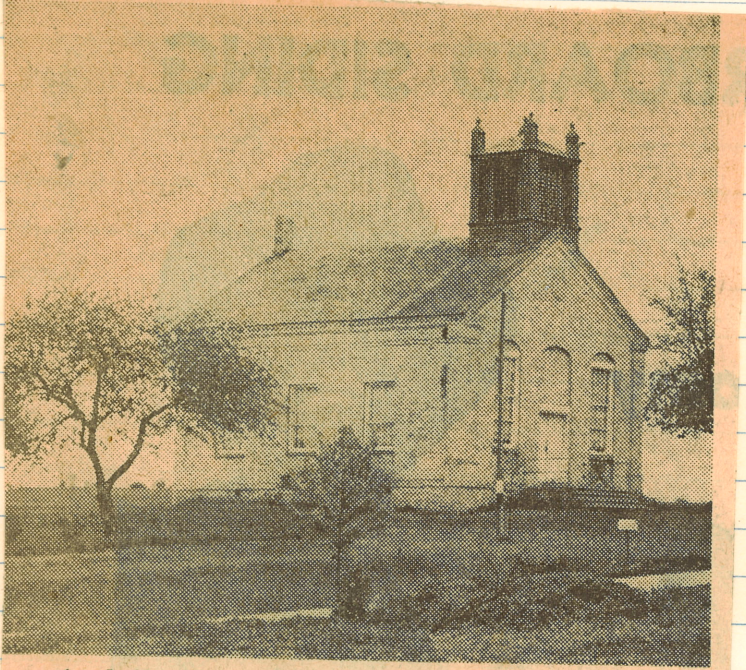
IN 1947, with legislative approval, Aztalan State Park was born, and in 1949 the first of a two-decade series of digs was conducted by the Wisconsin Archeological Survey for the Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR).

Exact details of the village were learned — how the Indians lived, what their homes looked like, and how they protected themselves from other tribes.

Ceremonial and burial mounds were reconstructed, and portions of the stockade were rebuilt.

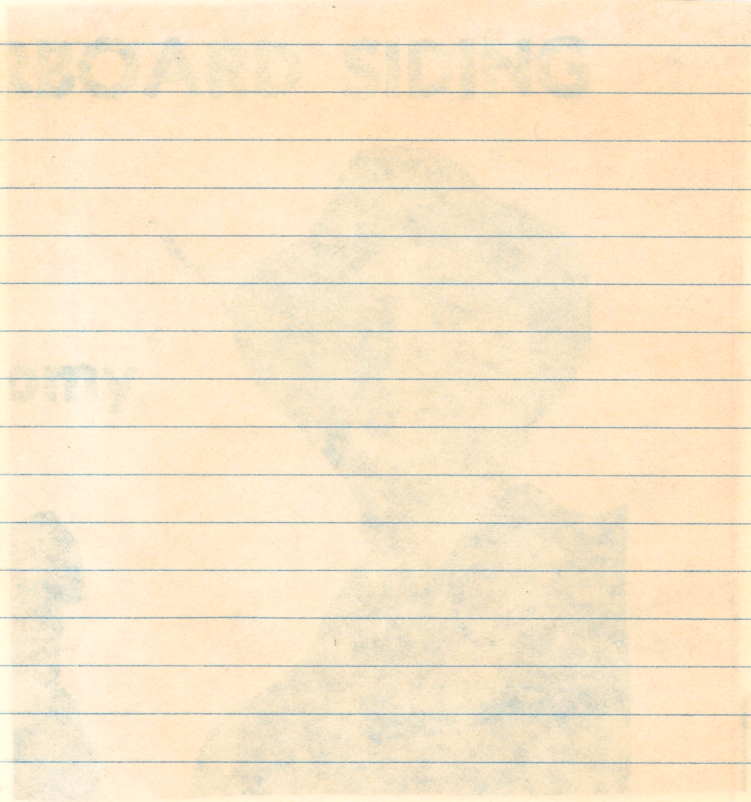
Now the 146-acre park begins to tell the story of Wisconsin's pre-recorded history and provides for picnics and other day uses as well.





Aztalan park, where the old stockaded city of an early people once stood, is about 3 miles east of Lake Mills. The park and its museum, above, are visited by thousands annually. The museum opens Memorial day. 1943

Opened as Museum - 1942



Spencer Museum - 1943