



7/27/67
 Shown above is a group of archaeological researchers engaged in excavating the third pyramidal mound at Aztalan State Park. After clearing away about one foot of soil, the floor of the trench is scraped carefully to determine whether the level of the old village has been reached. It is expected that about four feet of earth will have to be removed before any remnants of the old Aztalan culture will be uncovered. Two other similar mounds have already been excavated and restored in previous digs.



ancient Aztalan, artist's concept

Relics and remnants of two civilizations stand within a quarter of a mile of each other while reminders of a third whizz by on a blacktop road.

The scene is Aztalan, Wis., 30 miles east of Madison on Crawfish Creek.

In a brick building — once a Baptist Church — is the Aztalan Museum, housing pioneer heirlooms and Indian relics.

Adjacent are three restored log cabins, taken from sites in the surrounding countryside and filled with authentic furniture of pioneer days. The buildings date to the 1840s and 1850s.

Down the road are the huge pyramidal mounds and rebuilt stockade fences of the Aztalan Indians who lived on Crawfish Creek in 1100.

From the top of a three-story watch tower recently built near

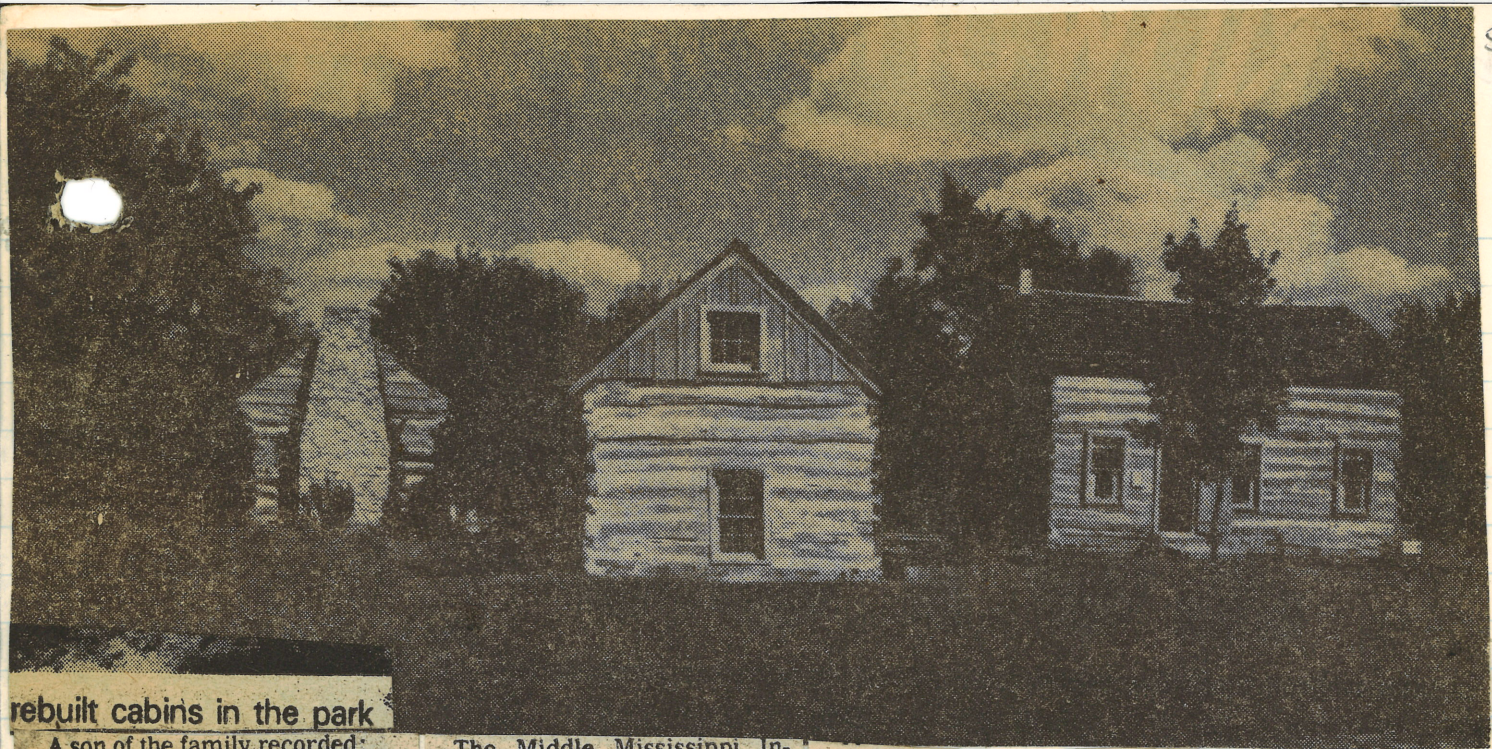
But the archaeologists surmise from bones found in ancient trash heaps that the Indians were cannibals.

Cannibalism admittedly is an unfriendly custom among neighbors.

The pioneers of the 1840s, however, were friendly. According to a plaque on one cabin, the family of eight that lived there never refused food and shelter to anyone who wanted it.



an Aztec-like Indian mound



rebuilt cabins in the park

A son of the family recorded: "Father often told us the place was quite comfortable. At least the members of the family kept close enough together to keep warm!"

A far cry from cannibalism. Both Pioneer Aztalan and the Aztalan Indian site, now a state park, are registered national historic landmarks.

It was one of the earliest pioneers, Nathaniel Hyer, who gave Aztalan its name. Seeing the truncated pyramids, he was reminded of similar structures built by the Aztec Indians. He named the place Aztalan.

A hundred years later, archaeologists discovered that the Indians who lived there for the relatively short time of a 100 years were products of the northernmost sphere of influence of what is called the Middle Mississippi period of prehistoric Indian

The Middle Mississippi Indians were strongly influenced by the Indians far to the south, including the Aztecs.

So Hyer was not far from the truth.

The pioneer town of Aztalan was founded in 1836 and flourished for almost half a century. It once was under consideration as a site for the state

capital. But the railroads passed it by and nearby Lake Mills flourished instead.

By 1900 Aztalan was a ghost town. Only the Baptist Church remained.

A group of energetic citizens of Lake Mills started the Lake-Mills Aztalan Historical Society in 1941.

This group restored the church and turned it into a museum, had the cabins brought to the site and built the watch tower that overlooks Indian Aztalan.

The cars of 1974 speed by them both.

The sound of crickets and the peaceful meanderings of Crawfish Creek stay the same.

There were curious similarities and shocking differences in the two cultures separated by 800 years.

People in both times grew corn.

One of the old tools in the museum, a huge oblong knife, was used by a youth during the 1860s. According to a tag attached to the knife, the youth one hot August evening said he was "sick and tired of chopping corn," stuck the knife into a tree and marched off to the Civil War. He served four years.

He probably chopped more corn when he got back.

Archaeologists digging at the site of the Aztalan Indians say the Indians grew corn inside the 21-acre area enclosed by an 18-foot stockade fence.

story / carol stevenson
photos / staff davis

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one day he got sick and tired chopping corn



interior of cabin, furnished a la 1840s

'Father often told us the place was quite comfortable. At least the members of the family kept close enough together to keep warm.'

Aztalan can be reached by taking Interstate 94 to the Highway 89 exit south into Lake Mills and going east on County B Road.



Pictured are persons exhibiting their arts and crafts at the 10th annual Aztalan Day held Sunday, July 25, at Aztalan State Park. The event is sponsored by the Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society and this year more than twenty exhibitors shared their arts and crafts.

In the top photo Mrs. Phyllis Sillman is shown hand painting dishes and Phillip Sillman is demonstrating the art of basket weaving. In the lower photo demonstrating the dipping of candles are, left to right: Tracy Wilson, Lisa Yahn and Mrs. Pat Yahn.

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Program On Quilting Draws A Large Crowd

2/14/82

Apparently there is considerable local interest in quilt-making, and this, in combination with the favorable Friday evening weather, resulted in a larger than usual attendance at the meeting of the Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society held in Seward Hall of the United Church of Christ-Congregational.

Presenting the program on "Quilting" was Mrs. Klaudeen Hansen of Sun Prairie. Mrs. Hansen is a well-known Madison area quilter, teacher and judge at quilting shows.

An interesting statement made by Mrs. Hansen in her opening remarks was this: "Many quilts are now coming off of beds and storage places and being put on the walls of homes as decorative hangings." To many present this was definitely a new use for quilts. Most heirloom pieces, especially, are safely tucked away in a good storage location and perhaps brought out only on special occasions. Naturally, whether one should use a quilt as a wall hanging would depend upon room size and color (furniture, carpeting, drapes, wallpaper or paint) already in the room. Some small-size apartments would not lend themselves to the use of large quilts as wall-hangings. There are many crafters, however, who are quilting smaller pieces into medallions and using them on the walls.

Quilts which Mrs. Hansen brought with her from her home included: strip or English patchwork, a quilted small wall arrangement in brown tones, a log cabin block, sampler quilt, grandmother's fan pattern and Dresden plate.

Mrs. Hansen commented that many of the old-time patterns are again enjoying modern day popularity by quilt-makers, with some slight changes in which the quilter introduces modern art motifs. Also, those who are too timid to tackle the making of a large quilt are quilting pillow tops for color accents in a room, and fashioning small-size medallions and wall-hangings.

Many questions were asked by the audience of Mrs. Hansen. These included: what materials to use in making quilts, how to preserve the beauty and colors of old quilts, whether old quilts can be washed or should they be dry-cleaned. Mrs. Hansen made an interesting comment about taking out heirloom pieces to be used for a period of time and later putting them away for a while to rest. She said to be sure to fold the quilt a different way each time it is put away in storage -- i.e., fold into thirds, halves, quarters. They may also be rolled rather than folded. Continuous refolding of quilts along the same lines can cause the material fibers to break and the material to become worn.

An excellent assortment of quilts and coverlets had been brought by individuals

made by her grandmother, using the sawtooth pineapple pattern, and having a flying geese border or edging. A third quilt made by her mother is called either the Lone Star, Morning Star, or Star of Bethlehem; a sampler quilt and a loom-woven wool coverlet.

Ellen White brought a Turkey Red quilt with feather-stitching. It was made in 1800 by her great-great-grandmother. Another quilt was of pineapple design with sawtooth border. She also brought with her some silk pieces which had been sewn together. According to Klaudeen, these pieces could be worked into a medallion or wallhanging.

This was a genuinely interesting program. Even the men enjoyed it. Mrs. Hansen has been invited by the Society to return at a future date, at which time she will show colored slides of a variety of quilts which have been prize-winners in shows that she has judged over the years.

Shortly after 7:30, Mrs. Connor Hansen conducted a short business meeting. The treasurer's report was given by Allen Flood and Mrs. Wayne Crone read the secretary's minutes of the previous meeting as recorded by Phil Sillman.

At the close of the evening everyone had an opportunity to take a closer look at the many quilts on display.

Mrs. Hansen extended a cordial invitation to all interested persons to attend the Prairie Quilt Show to be held at St. Albert's Parish Center in Sun Prairie on Monday, March 29, and Tuesday, March 30.

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Heller, Mrs. Elizabeth Kottwitz and Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Crone served coffee and assorted bar cookies.

The next meeting of the Historical Society will be in Seward Hall at 7:30, on Friday evening, March 19. Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Crone will expose the "Secrets of Lake Mills" as the evening's program. Friends of the Society are always welcome.

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An excellent assortment of quilts and coverlets had been brought by individuals to the meeting. The unusually variety of patterns proved to be most interesting.

Mrs. Connor (Ann) Hansen, president of the Historical Society, brought a quilt, the pattern of which is North Carolina Lily. The quilt is known to be somewhat over 100 years old. Her second quilt shown has the Evening Star pattern.

Mrs. Marvin Maasch brought a quilt which has the name Wild Rose Wreath. She said this quilt had been made by an aunt, who was born in 1863 and died at the age of 34. Klaudeen told Mrs. Maasch that the quilting had been done by the stab stitch method.

Mrs. Harold Heller brought a 30-year-old quilt -- the pattern: Grandmother's Flower Garden or Martha Washington's Flower Garden, using hexagon pieces.

Mrs. Chester Daniels brought a quilt which had been hand-sewn by her grandmother. The pattern is: Trip Around the World. This particular quilt was started at the center. Mrs. Daniels did the quilting on this piece.

Mrs. Carl Krueger's quilt was a star pattern, sometimes called the Barbara Fritsche Star. Double cable stitch was used in the quilting. Her grandmother and aunt made the quilt.

Mrs. Wayne Crone brought a number of quilts, among them what is called a Turkey Red, highlighted with embroidery and candlewicking, a 100-year-old quilt

Lake Mills" as the evening's program. Friends of the Society are always welcome.

NEWSLETTER OF THE LAKE MILLS-AZTALAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

GREETINGS FROM AZTALAN!

Another exciting year has become history. While the snow lies deep on the museum lawn, it is pleasant to look back on the events of 1969. For the second year, two successful afternoon meetings were held in January and February. In April, a large delegation of our members attended a joint meeting with the Fort Atkinson Historical Society at the Hoard Historical Museum. Late in April, Mr. Charles H. Knox, Curator of Special Exhibits at the State Historical Society Museum, came to help us arrange an attractive grouping, "Afternoon Callers," in the Museum.

Everything was ready for Opening Day, May 1, thanks to the efforts of President Mrs. Wm. R. Wolff, Curator Albert Kracht and Custodians Mr. and Mrs. Elias Stroede. May 3 brought the first tour group of the season, 75 professional archeologists, members of the American Society for Archeology who were having their annual convention in Milwaukee. Mr. Kracht took them on a tour of the mounds before their visit to the museum. The dedication of Wisconsin Registered Landmark No. 68, commemorating Pioneer Aztalan, was held on the museum lawn on May 4. Mr. Clifford H. Townsend, president of the Albion Academy Historical Society, was the principal speaker.

On June 15, the Zickert House, the two-story log house given to the Society by Mr. and Mrs. John Zickert in 1963, was opened to the public. The restoration of the house as a farm home of the late nineteenth century was a major project which immediately proved a fascinating attraction to our many visitors.

The Third Annual Aztalan Day celebration, July 27, was, unfortunately, dampened by intermittent rain. However, between showers, we enjoyed a timely address by Mr. A. A. Zurbuch and several musical selections. In August, the annual historical bus tour, under the direction of Walter Bubbert, took members and friends on a trip to Milwaukee and featured stops at the Mitchell Park Conservatory, Milwaukee Public Museum and the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The Museum closed October 31, after having welcomed 11,820 visitors from 41 states and 24 foreign countries. Immediately after closing, every movable exhibit was carried to storage so that the Museum could be painted in preparation for the 1970 season. The year closed with the traditional Christmas pot luck supper at the L. D. Fargo Free Public Library. The Moravian Folk Singers delighted the members and their guests with songs of the season.

Officers for 1970 are: Albert Kracht, President Emeritus and Curator of the Museum; Mrs. Donald R. Schultz, President; Mrs. Wm. R. Wolff, First Vice President and Acting Corresponding Secretary; Mrs. Mary Wilson, Second Vice President; Curtis Mansfield, Recording Secretary; Mrs. W. J. Erlandson, Treasurer; Mr. and Mrs. Elias Stroede, Museum Custodians. Directors are: Mrs. Edna Alexander, Mrs. Peter Dietrich, Mrs. W. J. Erlandson, Albert Kracht, Curtis Mansfield, Mrs. Donald R. Schultz, Mrs. Mary Wilson, Mrs. Wm. R. Wolff and A. A. Zurbuch.

Many important and exciting projects are being planned for 1970 and will require the active participation of all members. We are sure their success is assured. The Society meets on the 1st and 3rd of each month.



A LARGE NUMBER OF persons attended the sixth annual Aztalan Day sponsored by the Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical

Society at Aztalan State Park Sunday. Here a group of persons watch the hobby and craft show.

—(Daily Times Photo by Jerry Mehciz)

2nd Place Noncommercial...



The Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society received second place for their non-commercial float in the Town and Country Day Parade. Their display highlighted the caption -- THE PAST -- OUR FUTURE.

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 museum and
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