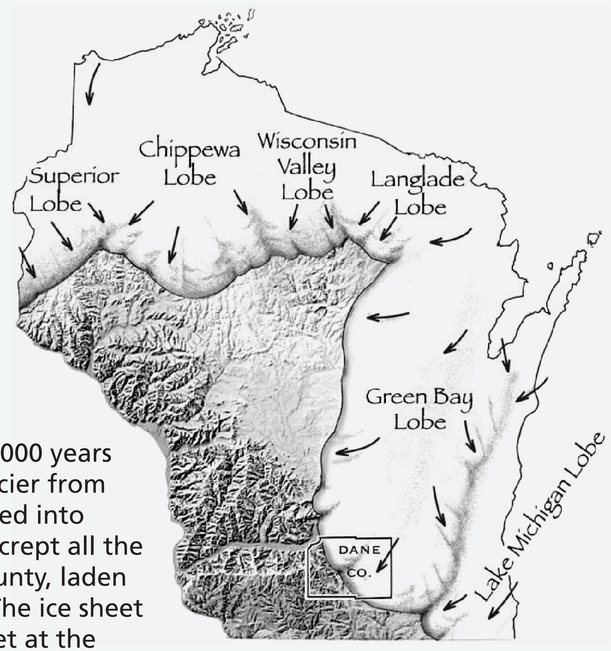
Our glacial HERITAGE

1 A GLACIER IN WISCONSIN



Approximately 30,000 years ago, a massive glacier from the north descended into Wisconsin. A lobe crept all the way into Dane County, laden with rock debris. The ice sheet rose over 1,000 feet at the location of the State Capitol.

Halting just 15 miles from the southwest corner of Dane County, the glacier began its very slow retreat from Wisconsin about 18,000 years ago.

The glacier's presence and retreat dramatically changed the landscape, bestowing the unique glacial heritage that we still see and benefit from today.

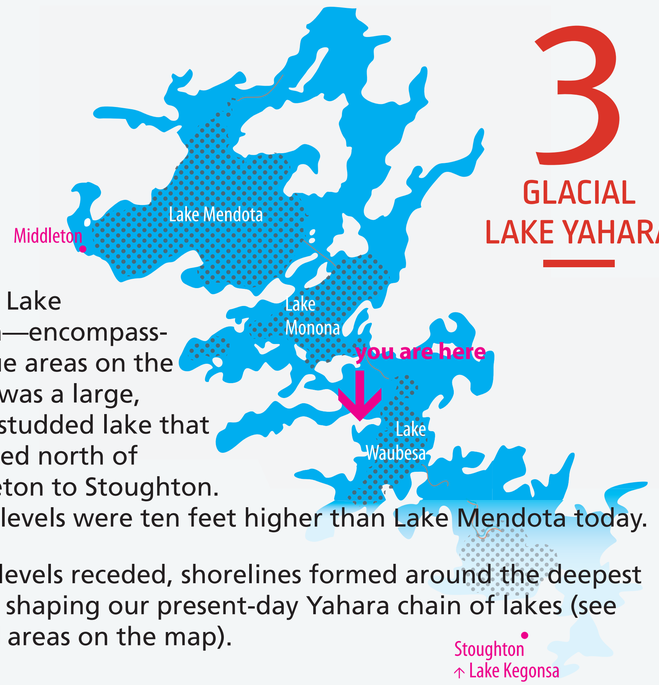
2 GLACIAL FOOTPRINTS

The glacier not only reshaped the land in its path but also dumped masses of rock debris and left behind an enormous volume of glacial meltwater.

The glacier formed drumlins, hills of rock debris. Hike the drumlin behind you—a part of Dane County's E-Way—for a view of the entire glacial landscape.

The glacier formed Glacial Lake Yahara when an old river valley dammed with glacial debris and then flooded with meltwater. This wetland here was once an inlet of the glacial lake.

3 GLACIAL LAKE YAHARA



Glacial Lake Yahara—encompassing blue areas on the map—was a large, island-studded lake that stretched north of Middleton to Stoughton. Water levels were ten feet higher than Lake Mendota today.

When levels receded, shorelines formed around the deepest basins, shaping our present-day Yahara chain of lakes (see dotted areas on the map).

RICH NATURAL RESOURCES FROM THE GLACIER

PLENTIFUL FOOD RESOURCES

With the retreating glacier and warming climate, a variety of natural habitats emerged in the Yahara lakes area, rich in diverse plant and animal life.

Native people made use of these post-glacial places. Within the land that is now Capital Springs Recreation Area, early people hunted and gathered food from a mosaic of prairie, stream, lake, wetland, forest, and oak savanna. Navigable water connecting these food resources made it a desirable location.

THE GLACIAL PEAT ECONOMY

In the 1850s, Euro-American settlers discovered that wetland sediments contained partially decayed vegetation called *peat* which could be dried into blocks and used as a heating fuel. During the Civil War as Madison faced depleting firewood supplies, residents turned to locally abundant peat resources.


early Madison peat marsh

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

As the climate warmed 8,000 years ago, prairie and oak savanna dominated upland areas in Dane County. These habitats produced rich soils that, along with ample water supplies from glaciation, are key agricultural resources that we still rely on today.

INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCES

Glacial landforms such as drumlins and moraines contain massive stockpiles of glacial rock debris. This debris provided millions of tons of coarse gravel and sand for concrete construction, roadbuilding, and urban fill projects. Many of Madison's infrastructure blocks are built with this important glacial aggregate.

Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District · Dane County Parks · Friends of Capital Springs · Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

IMAGE CREDITS Glacier: ArcticPhoto. Wisconsin glaciation, Glacial Lake Yahara, peat marsh: Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey. Drumlin: Kerry Hill. Acorn: Getty Images. Walleye: Virgil Beck, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Turtle: University of California, Davis. Peatville: Wisconsin Historical Society WHi-6230. Plough: Wisconsin Historical Society WHi-78038. Quarry: Fink's Paving.