

ROCK LAKE'S STELLAR PYRAMIDS

**LEGENDS OF WISCONSIN'S SUNKEN SITE
A PRELIMINARY STUDY**

J. PRICE Ph.D.

Rock Lake's Stellar Pyramids

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CHAPTER ONE: ROCK LAKE, WISCONSIN: UNDERWATER PYRAMIDS, CONES, STONE MOUNDS AND LEGENDS

Rock Lake is a small body of water located about 30 miles east of Madison, Wisconsin in the town of Lake Mills. ([Figure 1.1 Map](#)) The Lake had been called Tyranena by local Native American Indians, mostly Winnebago (now termed Ho Chunk), who lived there in the 1800s. Area residents had repeated rumors of Rock Lake's underwater structures for years. Although actual sightings of conical rock structures were recorded by Max Nohl in the late 1930s, these rock piles were first described by the Winnebago to the Tesch family, in the late 1890s, as "rock tepees." According to one tribal legend, the stone cones were built by the Ancient Ones, a foreign tribe, who had abandoned the area.¹

Rock Lake measures approximately one mile in width and two miles in length. Situated on the Lake's north end is a boat landing and adjacent Tyranena Park. Tyranena was a term used by the local Native Americans for the Lake when settlers arrived in the early 1800s. Tyranena is also the name of the port found in ancient Atlantis, as described in Plato's Timeaus. The pear-shaped Lake measures over five miles in circumference and nearly 70 feet in depth at specific points. The size and depth of the Lake has varied over the ages. Two distinct shore lines have suggested two water levels, the first at 40 feet, circa 3000 B.C., and the second of 26 feet dated to approximately 1200 B.C.

During the last century, there have been sightings of underwater conical rock towers, circular "chimney" stone cairns and pyramidal formations. More recently, Delta, Man, Turtle and Bear or Panther shaped stone mounds and a stone dragon relief have been sighted by divers and recorded on underwater side scan sonar imagery. The most spectacular of

these include several flat top, tiered and tent shaped pyramidal structures. There are numerous verbal and written accounts that describe Rock Lake's underwater structures. The most recent in depth published studies include texts by Frank Joseph and Archie Eschborn. These books contain detailed diving information, side scan underwater sonar readings, historical data, local legends and various hypotheses about the site's formation.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, underwater side scan sonar readings were taken of Rock Lake's structures by numerous diving crews. One set of side scan sonar readings, taken under the direction of University of Wisconsin Civil Engineering Professor Jim Scherz, were presented to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin officials for consideration. However, they were quickly dismissed as natural rock formations. The academic refusal to acknowledge the side scan sonar data as proof of existence of these structures was generated by only one or two State Historical Society of Wisconsin officials. More than likely, they did not view this text's exact side scan sonar image, but a similar, earlier recorded image.

A close examination of Rock Lake's underwater structures from these sonar readings allows for both local and global comparisons. A brief Rock Lake map overview is necessary to explain the data. Beginning in the north end, circa 1200 B.C., when the Lake was considerably smaller, there was an underground spring fed river that ran north to south. The river bed is still visible and parallels what appears to be a deep fault line. (Figure 1.11) The northern most structure is a two-tiered flat top pyramid termed Temple of the Moon in recent publications. (Figure 1.1a.) This structure is the key to the underwater site's history. Dated to an estimated 4000 B.C., in one text, it is Rock Lake's oldest underwater structure.² A 1989 underwater side scan sonar reading was taken under the direction of Professor Scherz. (Figure 1.2.) This previously unpublished image is a rare glimpse into ancient Native American antiquity. An extremely sacred site, it is perhaps the source for Egyptian, Osage and Sauk creation, ceremonial and futuristic legends. Composed of Portland quartzite rock combined with crushed up sea shell cement, termed marl, the pyramid was then assembled with hand hewn bricks. Although the truncated pyramid was termed the "Temple of the Moon" by authors, divers and local Native Americans, that is not the structure's original name.

Originally, it was considered one of the Sauk's ancient crystal Megi, or healing temples. (Sauk is one of the many names associated with the Sac and Fox Nation, currently located in Stroud, Oklahoma, following their removal from Wisconsin after the 1836 Blackhawk war.) Further, Rock Lake's "Temple of Moon" may also be considered the "Temple of Fire" as described in Pottawatomie legends, or the Temple of the Sun or Stellar Mystery House of the Osage. Its description is found in the Ojibway and Menominee Midi legends and even recalls the House of the Eternal Flame described in Osirian (Egyptian) texts. Understandably, the structure has been the center of debate over the last several years. However, in this treatise this phenomenal pyramidal underwater Megi, Midi or Medewigan structure will be called the Temple of the Sun.

In the **side sonar scan image**, the Temple of the Sun measures approximately 14 feet in height, yet only 4 feet of the truncated top appears above the Lake's murky bottom. (Figure 1.2) The side scan sonar reading reveals a northern orientated truncated pyramid with a step or platform that faces the eastern shore. The Temple's side view depicts a flat top structure that has a flared base. Its truncated formation closely recalls Temple J in Oaxaca, the pylons of the Temple of Edfu, Egypt and numerous other ancient world temples.

The Temple of the Sun's second step, a flared truncated formation, is incorporated on its eastern side. (Figure 1.2) Just below the 2 ½ foot bench step is a trench. Perhaps this was a platform, or boat landing, when it was built close to the Crawfish River. Or perhaps this is the Temple's eastern entrance described in Ojibway and Osage ceremonies and building plans.

Deep pits were found directly east of the bench step formation. Explored in 1935, adjacent to one pyramidal structure, probably the Temple of the Sun, was a round 5 foot shaft that extended into the Lake's muddy bottom. Years later, more of these round shafts were observed close to the underwater structure. Perhaps these pits were man made for water drainage to assist in ancient boat loading or unloading.

Information based on the **aerial sonar image** suggests that the complete Temple of the Sun structure is a rectangular and squared shaped building with a notch in its lower southwest corner. The length of the submerged in the muck Temple of the Sun may exceed 100 feet and its width measures 20 feet. The structure's aerial sonar view was sketched by

Dr. Scherz. (Figure 1.3) The aerial sonar reading taken by Dr. Scherz offers a more complete view of the Temple of the Sun by capturing the outline of the larger structure buried in the mud. Although the reading indicates the Temple of the Sun is an elongated rectangular and square shape building, only the Temple's truncated pyramidal top is visible in the side view. (Figure 1.2) The rest of the structure lies buried beneath Rock Lake's murky bottom. This may confuse the reader as in this treatise, site comparisons are made not only to the Temple's truncated side view (Figure 1.2), but also to the Temple of the Sun's long hall in the aerial view (Figure 1.3). These two structural views indicate that a much larger building, and subsequently a much larger site, may lie deeply buried underneath Rock Lake's muddy floor. Further, the comparison of the Temple of the Sun to an Ojibway Grande Medicine Lodge allows for the subdivision of the 100 foot hall into four compartments.

Directly across from the Temple of the Sun is an 18 foot stone conical tower. (Figure 1.2 left.) The placement of this conical structure recalls an Egyptian obelisk. It was the fourth formation observed by Mayor Clause Wilson's 1935 diving team.³ Measuring 10 feet in width, at the base, it is composed of man-made bricks. The conical tower appears to have an image embedded in its tip, which is visible in the side scan sonar reading.

The stone conical tower, one of four found on Rock Lake's bottom, has a parallel pole component in the Ojibway Medewigan ceremony. Similarly, the Egyptian Ben-ben, or bull pole (Djed column) and the painted cedar pole in the Ojibway Medicine Lodge link creation to man's earthly appearance. In both religions the pole, or column, is associated with the soul's travel during creation and temple initiation, and is utilized in temple ceremonies.

In 1935, Mayor Claude Wilson supervised the University of Wisconsin Swim Team divers who observed four pyramidal structures, including the Temple of the Sun. Two other structures, located several hundreds yards east of the Temple, resembled stone tents. One other formation, with a 20 ft. square base and similar height, was seen in the Lake's southeast corner. Several hundred yards east of the Temple of the Sun are two stone Ridge top mounds termed the Limnatis and Kennedy mounds. (Figure 1.1c.) In April 1936, area residents Fayette Morgan and Victor Taylor initially viewed these two sunken rectangular forms from an airplane each about

100 feet in length. These are the tent shaped structures viewed by Wilson's 1935 team. The stone mounds are composed of man-made brick and were covered in white plaster at one time. They have a small platform at the top. They may contain burials of significant leaders, and according to one elder, were once painted with symbols.

In 1967, diver Jack Kennedy observed an underwater horizontal tent-like stone structure, later termed the Limnatis mound, at a depth of 40 feet. Kennedy calculated this pyramidal structure to measure roughly 4 feet in height, 100 feet in length and 20 feet in width. Kennedy estimated these numbers by measuring its length, by counting the number of foot strokes, based upon his height. He observed it was composed of man-made brick and was flat on its narrow top side. An initial sketch was published in *Skin Diver* magazine. Some texts label the Limnatis tent mound as the main pyramid.

There is a discrepancy in two published texts regarding the labeling of these underwater artifacts. In Frank Joseph's 1995 text entitled Atlantis in Wisconsin, the Temple of the Moon (Sun) is also called the Limnatis mound, and there is only one tent-shape rock structure termed the Kennedy mound.⁴ However in Archie Eschborn's 2004 text entitled The Dragon in the Lake, the Kennedy and Limnatis mounds are both tent-shaped structures lying close to one and other.⁵ The larger Temple of the Sun lies several hundred yards to the west.

Nearby above ground earthen pyramids are found at Aztalan, a site less than three miles from Rock Lake. The site contains two earthen truncated step pyramidal mounds, labeled Temple of the Sun and Moon, respectively. The Temple of the Sun was excavated in the 1930s by S. Barrett and later reassembled. Aztalan was a copper melting site.

From Aztalan's Temple of the Sun's top platform one can view a winter solstice alignment of the December 21 sunrise, over a red cedar marker pole placed on Christmas Hill, just across the Crawfish River. Aztalan's Temple of the Moon is smaller in size. These earthen pyramids were built hundreds of years after Rock Lake's stone structures, during the Woodland era, according to Wisconsin archeological records.

Thirty miles west, in Lake Monona's Outlet site is another truncated earthen pyramid. Surveyed by Charles Brown in the 1940s, the site yielded ancient stone-lined structures. The stone-lined lakeshore structures are

indicative of advancements in architecture and may also be found in Rock Lake. The Sac and Fox Nation's Monona clan exists today. Monona means "mother moon" in Sauk.

Evidence of Rock Lake's lower water level is found southeast of the Limnatis Mound in Zeke's Wall. This right angle stone wall was built as a pier or sea wall. (Figure 1.1d.) The stone wall was documented by Rock Lake Research Society in 1999. This structure appears in Frank Joseph's 1995 text, but not in Archie Eschborn's 2004 mapping of Rock Lake. Other underwater walls are found in northern Wisconsin and upper Michigan. South and adjacent to the Lake's deepest point are a series of underwater springs. Nearly 70 feet underwater, the springs are located east of five, or perhaps seven, rock conical chimneys. (Figure 1.1e.) The chimneys were once near edge of the shore line. Rock chimneys are also found in southern Wisconsin, from Grant, Richland to Waukesha counties. The stone circles also appear in Maine, Minnesota and Ireland.

Measuring 3½ feet tall, only two chimneys remain intact, the others damaged by time and fisherman's careless anchoring techniques. They were used for smoking, cooking, heat or ceremonial practices by the local native population. Recorded in both Osage and Pottawatomie traditions as Places of the Fire, often three or five in number, the stone cairns were used when the tribes assembled to form alliances.

Pottawatomie means "Keeper of the Place of the Fire." The Ojibway, Ottawa and Pottawatomie tribes were once one nation at Michellamackinac. The Tribe once occupied Door County, on the shores of Lake Michigan, and then expanded south to Waukesha, Racine and Menasha and further west. First discovered in 1634 by Jean Nicolet on Mackinaw Island, the Pottawatomie fur traders were grouped with the Ojibway, Sac, Fox and Mascouten. When the tribes divided, the Pottawatomie took with them the eternal flame, or sacred fire, to warm the wigwam and symbolically provide life to the nation. Therefore, the rock cairns may be viewed as ceremonial "Places of the Fire." This practice may echo the Temple of the Sun's interior ceremonies.

Directly east of the rock chimneys are two stone mounds, one in the shape of a turtle (Figure 1.1f.), the other a headless man. (Figure 1.1g.) Composed of Portland quartzite, the Turtle mound has four extended legs, an elongated head and small tail. The Turtle mound faces east and links

the site to various Native American creation myths. In Ojibway, Osage and Sauk creation, the turtle, muskrat or otter dives to lower earth, following the great flood, and swims to the surface with a handful of soil. The soil then forms the new earth. This cosmological sequence continues with the layering of heavens and underworlds and stories vary from tribe to tribe.

On land, southwestern Wisconsin earthen Turtle mounds are found with split, curved or straight tails, offering a variety of interpretations from swimming to land travel. The nearby Aztalan earthen Turtle mound has a spiral tail and is located just north of Rock Lake. It has been symbolically interpreted as a musical lyre. The mound's placement aligns with various structures in Michigan's Upper Peninsula according to Dr. Scherz' research.

However, the stories of Elk Nation prophet Da coo tah offer the first plausible explanation for the underwater stone Turtle mound. In 1830, author William Pidgeon recorded the old Sioux sage's stories about specific midwestern Indian mound sites. Published in 1850, Pidgeon's text describes the monumental burial of the Black Tortoise Nation members, following a series of battles that occurred 600 years earlier.⁶ The Black Tortoise Nation was a tribe that came from the south and allied with the Elk Nation. One theory suggests they were a division of the Ogala Sioux Nation, another suggests that the Osage Nation migrated from Kentucky and Tennessee during the last millennia.

Located 60 miles north of Davenport, Iowa, on the Mississippi River, is a complex Turtle mound burial and Triangular Festival mound that honors the Black Tortoise Nation. (Note that Davenport, Iowa is considered by the Sac and Fox Nation to be their original home, Sauk-e-nuk.) The Tortoise shape design indicates that the Turtle mound effigy was an established native image and a reflection of a specific clan. Surveyed in 1833, by Pidgeon, it is a complex array of mounds. Da coo tah believed that the Tortoise mound was an honorary burial for a Black Tortoise Nation chief who perished in the battle of Three Nations, nearly 600 years earlier.

A more complete creation site comparison is found three miles north of Cassville, in southwestern Wisconsin. Recorded and illustrated in Cyrus Thomas' infamous Indian mound text, the Turtle mound was located on the Dewey farm in Grant County, Wisconsin.⁷ This site yielded a similar extended legged Turtle mound, surrounded by two Bear mounds and two

Thunderbird mounds, placed as if strolling along the riverbank, evolving out of the waters. The site also contained many stone cairns similar to those found in Rock Lake.

In spite of his logical explanations and comparisons, within 50 years, Pidgeon's research was completely discredited by Theodore H. Lewis, co-author and surveyor of the Northwestern Archeological Survey, and subsequently slighted by The Smithsonian Institute. In 1884, Lewis surveyed the Black Tortoise site and found little resemblance to Pidgeon's drawings. Instead of a large Turtle and conical mounds, Lewis sketched several non-descript piles of earth and stated that both Pidgeon and Da coo tah were myth makers. He further doubted if Da coo tah even existed. This criticism led to the academic dismissal of Pidgeon's work as fantasy. Yet, the legends and artifacts described by Da coo tah offer the most plausible explanations of the Indian mounds. Did it occur to Lewis that 40 years of time and possible excavation had eroded the site? In any event, the evidence for this honorary native burial still exists, not only on land Turtle mounds, surveyed by Increase Lapham (1836) and Charles Brown, but on Rock Lake's floor.

The Turtle mound of neighboring Prairie Village, Waukesha most closely resembles the Rock Lake's structure. Located 45 miles east of Rock Lake, Waukesha was once the home of the Pottawatomie. Indeed, Waukesha means "fox" in Pottawatomie, as they were abundantly found in the area. Surveyed in 1836 by Wisconsin researcher Increase Lapham, the Prairie Village Turtle mounds included a 92 foot long (inclusive of a 60 foot tapered tail) and 6 foot high Turtle mound, an adjacent Conical mound, a worn down Panther or Bear mound, two Linear mounds and another small footless Turtle mound. Note the similarities between the Rock Lake Turtle and the Prairie Village earthen Turtle mound including four extended legs, an elongated head and placement near a Bear mound. These similar Turtle images reflect the Native American influence on the structures' design. Further, the elongation of the Turtle's head may suggest a local Blanding, Wood or Painted Turtle as the image's source.

Rock Lake's headless Man mound has a more gruesome allegory. (Figure 1.1g.) Composed of quartzite, it has broad shoulders, nearly undistinguishable arms, and short tapered legs. It faces west, in Sauk, the land of the dearly departed. Da coo tah believed that Man mounds were

honorary burials for great chiefs of the Five Nations. He specified that Man mounds with tapered arms, like the Rock Lake stone mound, had no sons. The placement of a headless Man mound next to a Turtle mound, as located in Rock Lake, suggests a tribute to the Tortoise tribe.

Man mounds located in southern Wisconsin's Sauk, Richland and Waukesha counties were found in various forms, including headless, horned or winged shapes. In another interpretation, a headless Man mound may suggest the defeat of one nation, or local tribe over another. Depending on the tribe, this headless soul may not enter the western land beyond the Milky Way, or travel past the great White River of stars.

In 1940, a large underwater triangular structure, now termed Delta mound, was observed from an airplane by local residents. Viewed again in 1987 by Frank Joseph, the large stone Delta mound is an equilateral triangular mound with its tip pointing north and its sides measuring 300 feet each. Located in Rock Lake's southwestern end, Delta Mound is composed of solid limestone bricks and may extend deep into the Lake's bottom. (Figure 1.1h) Note that during the 1930s, due to so many underwater structural sightings, the government funded Rock Lake explorations, directed by Wisconsin state archaeologist Charles Brown and state geologist E. F. Bean. They were sponsored by the Federal Writer's Project director, B.W. Saunders.

In the aerial view, near Delta Mound's northern tip are two adjacent dark circles. Later sonar and aerial images proved that the two circles were once conical stone towers that measured 20–26 feet in height. Currently in decline, these towers may have been a gate, or portal, used as alignment instruments.

The Delta mound megalith has several earthen mound counterparts. Undocumented triangular earthen mounds were reported in Wisconsin's Richland and Iowa counties and in Minnesota and Ohio. Located in Richland County, on the Kickapoo Plain, was a triangular formation composed of three 200 foot Linear mounds, that surrounded a platform truncated Pyramid mound. (Figure 4.1) De-coo-tah specifically describes this site as commemorating the union of three Indian Nations, erected following a great war in attempts for peace.⁸ He claimed the triangular mounds were used for celebrations of the union of three tribes.

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