

## 21# Geological Origin

The land you stand on was once covered by a huge glacier of ice hundreds of feet thick. A finger-like point of the glacier arrived in the Madison area between 20,000 and 30,000 years ago.

This glacial movement carved out rock and soil from the ancient landscape. The rock and soil was dumped into a big river valley under what is now Lake Mendota.

When the glacier finally retreated, it left Glacial Lake Yahara—a lake twelve feet higher than the Lake Mendota we know today. Look around you; imagine that all of the flat land you see, including the playing fields and parking lots, used to be under water. At some point erosion formed an outlet and drained Glacial Lake Yahara. Water levels dropped, creating the four major lakes of the Yahara River watershed we know today: Mendota, Monona, Waubesa, and Kegonsa.

A sandbar eventually built up separating the Class of 1918 Marsh from Lake Mendota. What was once part of the lake transformed into a wet sedge meadow. The University of Wisconsin acquired the meadow in 1910. The meadow wasn't separated for long. The installation of the Tenney Park locks in 1912 forced lake levels to rise five feet, and the 1918 Marsh area was once again connected to the water.