

The "Big" M

The "Big" M is on Platte Mound Road with an elevation of 1,427 feet. Platte Mound Road isn't in Platteville, it's in the Town of Belmont. Just down the road going east is the Belmont Mound State Park which contains the Belmont Mound, which is 27 feet shorter.



From the top of the Platte Mound, you can see the Mississippi River bluffs in Iowa (including, on a really clear day, Sugar Loaf, at 1,065 feet the fourth highest point in Iowa, south of Cassville), and what pass for high points in Illinois, including Charles Mound, Illinois' highest point (which is 192 feet lower than the Mound), and Scales Mound (which is 267 feet lower than the Mound).

The Platte Mound is the 34th highest point in Wisconsin, lower than Blue Mounds (1,719 feet in Iowa County — the highest point in the Driftless Area — and 1,489 feet in Dane County), and Sauk Point (1,593 feet) in Sauk County. It's also higher than Grant County's highest point (1,240 feet) on Military Ridge west of Fennimore, which is ironic to those who think the Mound is in Grant County.

The Platte Mound sits within the Driftless Area, the parts of Wisconsin (and, for that matter, southeastern Minnesota, northeastern Iowa and northwestern Illinois) the glaciers never flattened.

On a clear windy fall afternoon, a visitor can see fall colors — red, gold and green leaves, blue and violet flowers, and tan and brown ground — and shapes: the contours of farm fields below, cumulus clouds underneath a blue sky.

The original "M" design was based on the monogram of the Wisconsin Mining School in 1936. The land remains under the ownership of the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, and the property was later named Clausen Park. The Platteville Mound is one mile long and approximately one-half mile wide, 150 feet high and 450 feet above the city at the summit of the hill. The "M" was built on the south side of the hill at a 45-degree gradient. The "M" is maintained by the University of Wisconsin-Platteville Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) Chapter. Maintenance includes whitewashing the "M" with lye, setting up and lighting kerosene lanterns, as well as all weeding for the M lighting.

Facts at a Glance

- An "M" is the official symbol for the "Miners" of the Wisconsin Institute of Technology, formerly the Wisconsin Mining School and currently the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

- Platte Mound is 150 feet high and rises an estimated 400 feet above the city of Platteville, is one mile long and one half mile wide. It is about five miles from campus.
- Total area of the "M" exceeds one acre and is approximately 24,000 square feet in area. ? The "M" is built on a 45-degree slope of the Platte Mound and can be seen from high points in Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin.
- The engineers at the Wisconsin Mining School finished construction of the "M" on May 19, 1937.
- The legs are about 241 feet high and 214 feet apart. Each leg is 45 feet at the base and 25 feet wide at the center.
- Howard B. Morrow, president of the Wisconsin Mining School, helped supervise the construction.
- The engineering students moved four tons of rock and limestone using picks, crowbars and wheelbarrows to shape the "M."
- On March 31, 1960, L.R. Clausen, landowner of 93 acres of the mound, donated the land to officially make it part of the Wisconsin Mining School.
- The "M" was featured in an issue of Life Magazine on May 23, 1949, and by MTV in 1987.

Address

18600 W Mound Rd.
Belmont, WI 53510
United States

[View in Google Maps](#)

42.7640575, -90.4056983