

Known until 1916 as Government Hill because it was used for government surveying purposes, Lapham Peak is the highest point in Waukesha County at 1233 ft. It was purchased by the state in 1905 as part of the farms acquired for a tuberculosis hospital. The present 45 foot tower was built in 1940.

Increase A. Lapham (1811-1875), for whom the peak is named, was a New Yorker who came to Wisconsin in 1836 as an engineer. He lived in Milwaukee and traveled the state, retiring to the Oconomowoc area where he resided until his death.

He made a survey of all Indian mounds in the state and was a prolific author of many Wisconsin scientific topics. Lapham was one of the state's premier 19th century scientists. He was recognized as a pioneer scholar, engineer, botanist, geologist, archeologist, conservationist and meteorologist.

Lapham is best remembered as the father of the United States Weather Bureau. From this peak he recorded many weather observations for his pioneering work in meteorology, which included publishing isothermal maps of Wisconsin and working with the Smithsonian Institution as a weather observer for the Great Lakes region. Concerned with potential storm disasters to the shipping industry and Wisconsin farming, Lapham proposed sending weather information from Pike's Peak, CO, to the Great Lakes region. A national weather service was approved by Congress on February 9, 1870. On November 8th, working as the assistant to the Chief Signal Corps Officer, Lapham recorded the first published national weather forecast, calling for "high winds and falling temperatures for Chicago, Detroit and the Eastern Cities."