

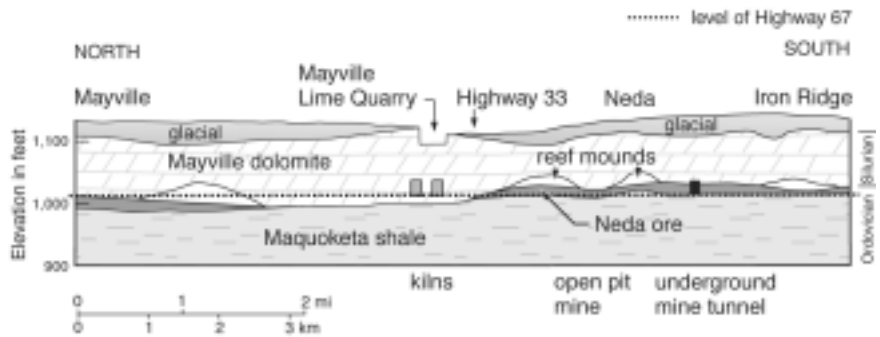
ROADSIDE GEOLOGY OF WISCONSIN

Robert H. Dott, Jr. and John W. Attig

Shortly before I (Bob) was to retire, a surprise call came from Professor Donald Hyndman in Missoula, Montana asking me to write a *Roadside Geology for Wisconsin*. The *Roadside* series, published by the Mountain Press of Missoula, began with volumes about western states where geology is raw and obvious, but I questioned if there would be much demand for such a guide in the Midwest. Hyndman assured me that there is a need (although he provided no evidence), so I suggested that Rachel and Dick Paull of the UW-Milwaukee revise their late 1970s guide for the *Roadside* series. Don said that he had already asked them, but they declined. I was running out of options—fish or cut bait.

Having written a textbook, *Evolution of the Earth*, I knew that a guide would be a major undertaking. Although I felt strongly the importance of making science accessible to general audiences, was I willing to make the necessary commitment? Doing a guide seemed a worthy public service project for retirement, but I had already planned other projects. Could I do both? Finally, I decided I would undertake the guide if I could interest a glacial geologist colleague to be co-author, for I could not do justice to the Quaternary record, which is so important in Wisconsin. Fortunately, John Attig shared my view of the importance of interpreting geology for lay people, and agreed to join me.

How did we go about writing a guide to the geology of an entire state? We first had to decide how to organize the book. We chose to treat the subject by four topographic regions—



A section along the face of the Niagara Escarpment in the Mayville-Neda area showing the stratigraphic position of the Neda iron ore.

Northern Highlands, Western Uplands, Baraboo-Dells-Central Plain, and Eastern Uplands. We then selected a network of highways that would provide coverage of the important geological features in each region; geologically significant state parks would receive special treatment. John took responsibility for everything Quaternary and Bob took the pre-Quaternary.

Hyndman had indicated that diagrams could be prepared with minimal fuss as free hand sketches using felt pens. Meanwhile, however, computer graphics were sweeping the publishing world like lightning, so we quickly realized that the illustrations would be a major hurdle, yet they are vital to any geological treatise. State Geologist Jamie Robertson came to our rescue by agreeing to have the Survey's Graphic Artist, Susan Hunt, prepare the many diagrams and the book's cover; subsequently Deborah Patterson of the Survey prepared several shaded relief diagrams. Mary Diman of the Department of Geology and Geophysics scanned and enhanced the photographs. By shepherding us through the wonderland of computer graphics, Susan contributed as much as we did to the book.



Robert H. Dott, Jr.



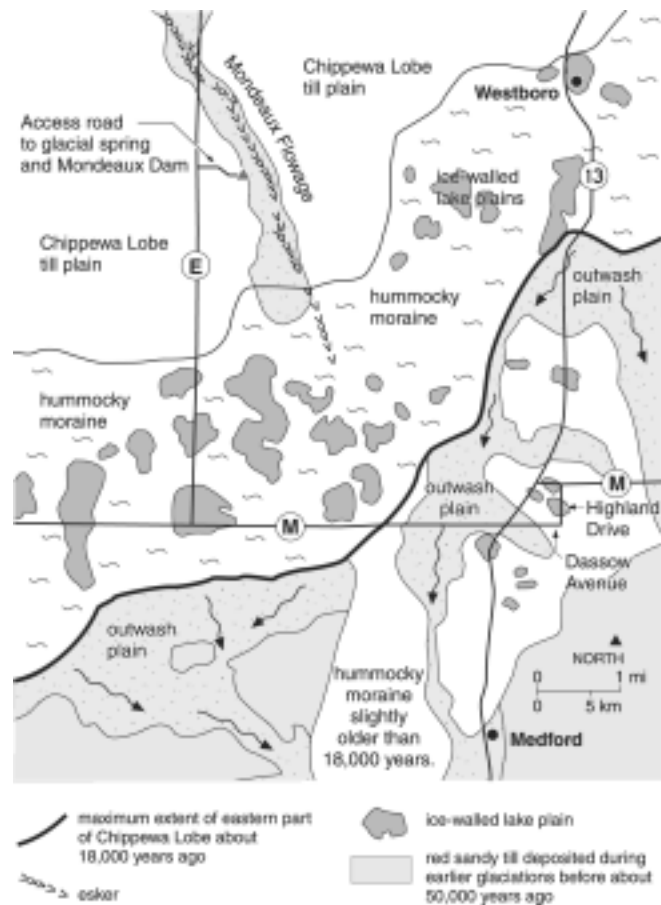
John W. Attig

The most fun was criss-crossing the state, making notes, taking photographs, and collecting relevant information from parks, chambers of commerce, etc. Our wives accompanied us on most junkets to drive or take notes. Traveling and camping in parts of the state that had been little known to us was one of the benefits of the project. After making field traverses and consulting literature sources, we each wrote drafts for a given region. Then we exchanged drafts, nit picked each other's prose, debated questions, and noted gaps in coverage. After reworking our drafts, we pressed colleagues to critique them to assure that our book would be as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

There were many unanticipated dividends from writing *Roadside Geology of Wisconsin*. Besides learning a lot more about the state's geology and the venerable place that it has played in the history of geology in North America, there were a lot of less momentous revelations. For example, diamonds were found long ago in the tills of eastern Wisconsin and there are at least two possible meteorite or asteroid impact sites. More trivial were the discoveries that, in the late 1800s, bed bugs were a hazard of field work and several spas earned the Milwaukee area the nickname "Saratoga of the West". We gained new appreciation of such unique attractions as the Dickeyville Grotto constructed in part of petrified wood and fossil shells and for the Concrete Park at Phillips with quaint concrete statuary depicting the early settlement of the state. We also learned that the important Penokean orogeny was named for Penokee Gap, which itself was a misspelling by a government printer in the 1800s of "pewabic," the Chippewa word for iron. And Rock Island off the tip of the Door Peninsula became a kind of "Little Iceland" in the hands of the Chicago immigrant inventor-industrialist, Chester Thordardson. Finally, our vocabularies have been enriched by such peculiarly Wisconsin terms for topographic features like mound, flowage, and coulee. All in all this has been a very rewarding experience for us and we hope that many people will enjoy our book.

A block diagram of wind and water dunes, both of which were characteristic of Cambrian deposition in the region around Wisconsin Dells.

*Illustrations by Susan Hunt,
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courtesy of the Wisconsin Geological
and Natural History Survey.*



Map of the Mondeaux Flowage near Medford showing an esker and ice walled lake plains.

The State Geological and Natural History Survey sells *Roadside Geology of Wisconsin*, which will also be available in bookstores. For your convenience, an order form is included at the back of this *Outcrop*. We have assigned our royalties to the UW Foundation for the benefit of the Department of Geology and Geophysics, its museum, and the library. Order a bunch of copies today!

