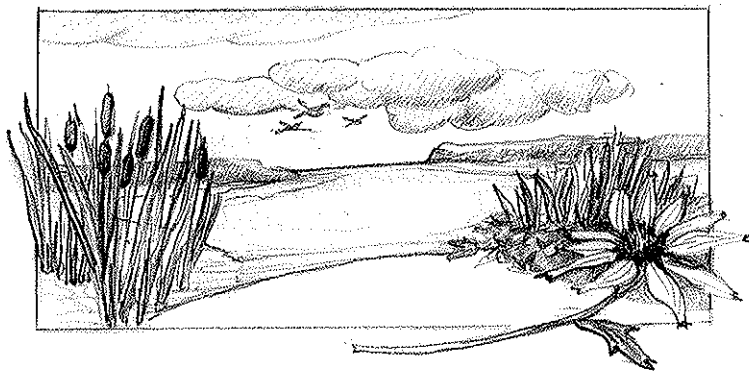


Chapter One: The Land Is Formed



In the beginning, there was rock. The piece of the earth's crust that was to become Dane County underwent dramatic changes throughout geologic time. Mountains rose from molten origins and eroded to bedrock. Tropical seas bathed its surface and deposited sediments for millennia. Wind and rain scoured its surface. Glaciers and rivers carved it into the shape of the land we know today.

The Precambrian Period

The bedrock foundation on which Dane County rests today was shaped deep under the earth's surface some 1.5 billion years ago at a point south of the equator.¹ This solid bedrock base, resting 730 to 820 feet below the surface, is all that remains of an ancient mountain range comparable in stature to the contemporary Rocky Mountains.² All the rocks and minerals of Dane County, the basic ground materials that make up our soils today, came from that ancient range.

Over a period of some 900 million years, these great mountains were weathered and eroded to form a southward tilting plain. During the same interval the Baraboo range became exposed as its less resistant neighbors were worn away. The resulting surface of eroded bedrock that remained is known as the peneplain. Approximately 600 million years ago, forces within the earth's crust lifted and dropped the peneplain, moving this ancient slab of rock to the position it occupies