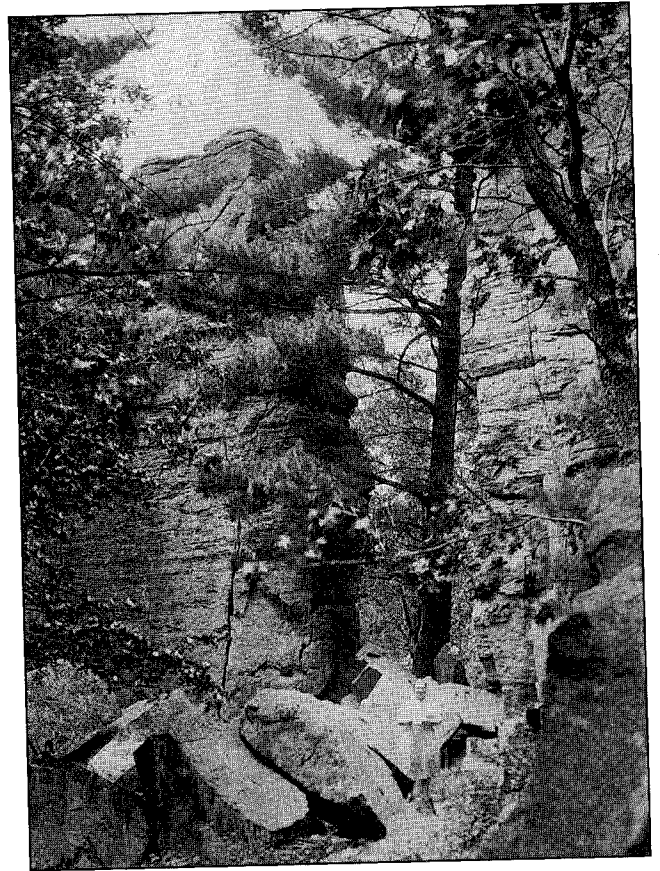


Natural Resources



Above: Houghton Rock, Town of Adams. Following Page: "The Hole in the Rock" on Rattlesnake Mound--both remnants of rock formed by ancient seas hundreds of millions of years ago. (Courtesy, H.H. Bennett Studio Foundation)

The natural resources of Adams County were shaped by wind, water, earth and hundreds of millions of years of time. The soil underlying the county was formed in layers of sediment beneath an ancient sea. The material forming these layers varied from coarse sand to fine clay to lime-rich shells of living creatures, all of which fused into stone.

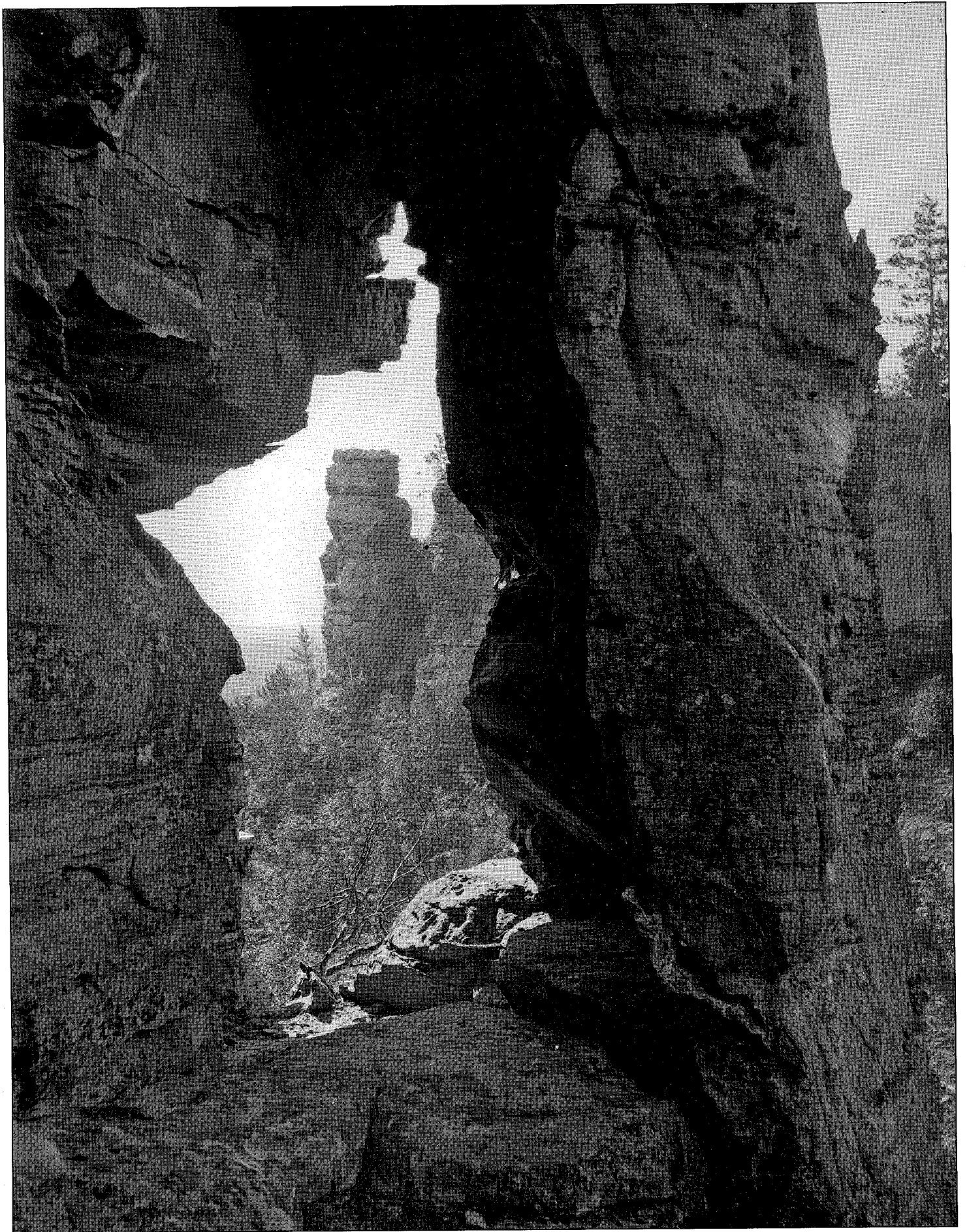
In time the sea drained, leaving a flat plain subject to erosion by wind and water. In the course of millions of years, the softer layers of stone eroded away, but the harder stone remained. These deposits of harder stone became the bluffs and mounds still present in Adams County today. They also form the "Dells" of the Wisconsin River, much of which is in Adams County. The oldest surface rock in the county is the quartzite at Dyracuse Rock in Rome and Hamilton Bluffs in Leola both about 500 million years old. Friendship, Roche-A-Cri, Quincy, Rattlesnake and Elephant rocks are a little younger, only about 300 million years.

In more recent times, merely tens of thousands of years ago, Adams County was beneath the

waters of a vast freshwater lake formed by the melting of the Ice Age glaciers which halted their advance across Wisconsin on the eastern edge of the county. Now the mounds and bluffs--already hundreds of millions of years old--were islands in a lake which extended from Coloma to Black River Falls and from Stevens Point to Devils Lake.

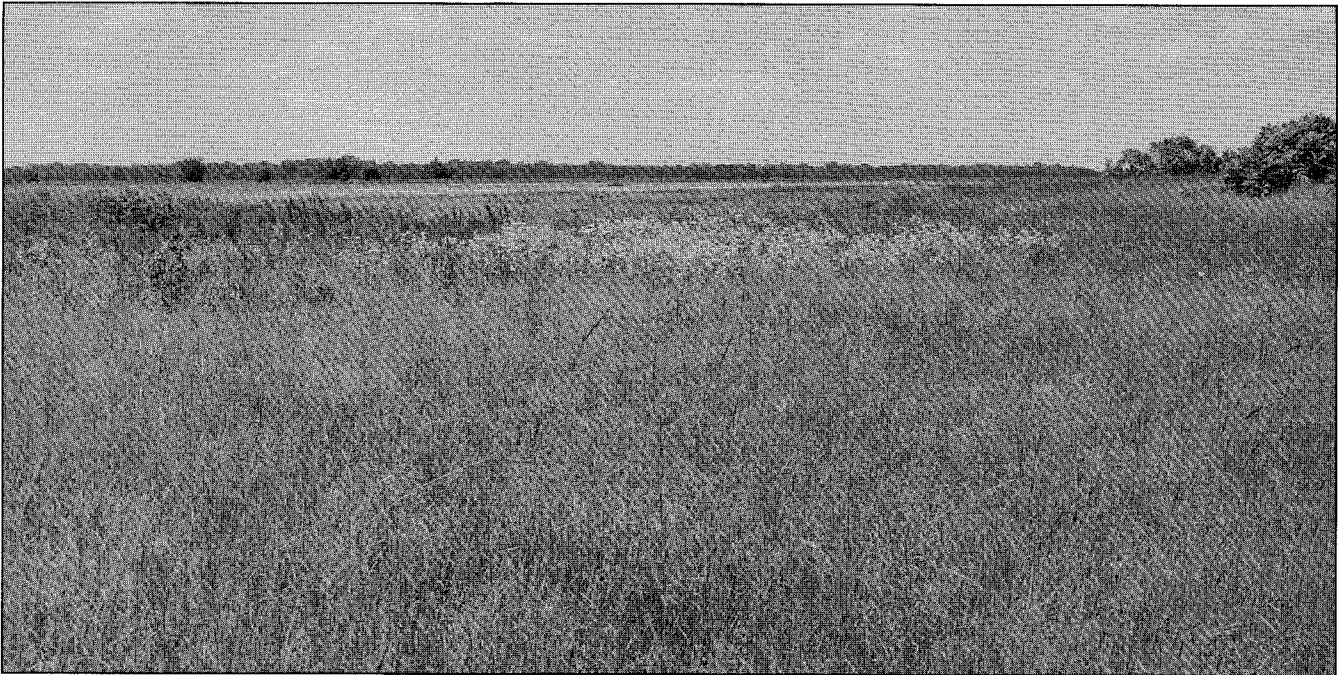
About 14,000 years ago, a dam of ice south of what is now Wisconsin Dells gave way and glacial Lake Wisconsin drained. In a matter of weeks, water poured down the bed of the Wisconsin River, cutting and shaping the gorges and rock formations of the Dells. In Adams County water levels dropped one hundred feet or more and the flat, sandy lakebed began to dry out. Streams formed, most of them running from the still melting glacier on the east of the county to the river on the west. Extensive wetlands remained throughout the county, especially in the future towns of Colburn and Leola, but also in Adams, Easton and Quincy. Soil began to form, plants to grow, wildlife to appear.

The glacier whose meltwater formed Lake Wisconsin began its retreat about 12,000 years ago. The line where its advance halted--the





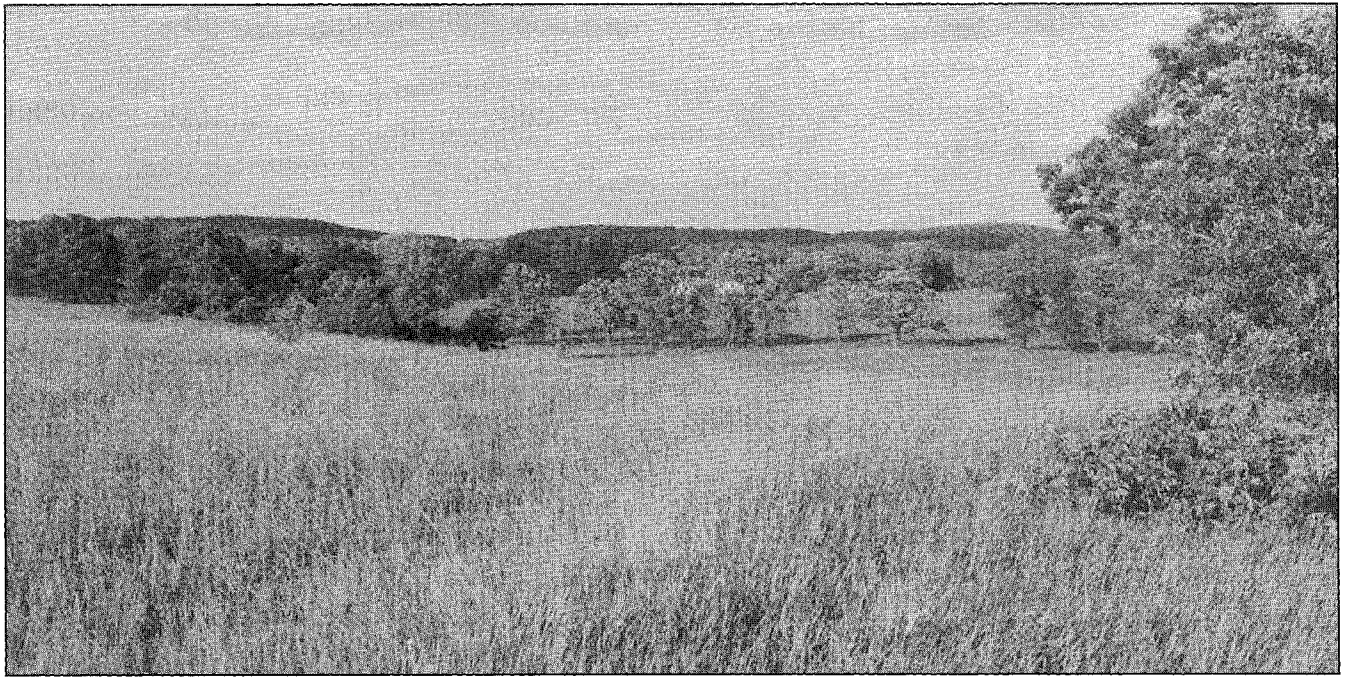
Above: The ground in front of this oak ridge in the Town of Richfield was recently logged, leaving an open terrain broken by oak or pine woods reminiscent of the landscape maintained by the native people who inhabited Adams County prior to white settlement. Below: Remnants of glacial Lake Wisconsin, wetlands like this stretch of the Leola Marsh once covered about one-quarter of Adams County.



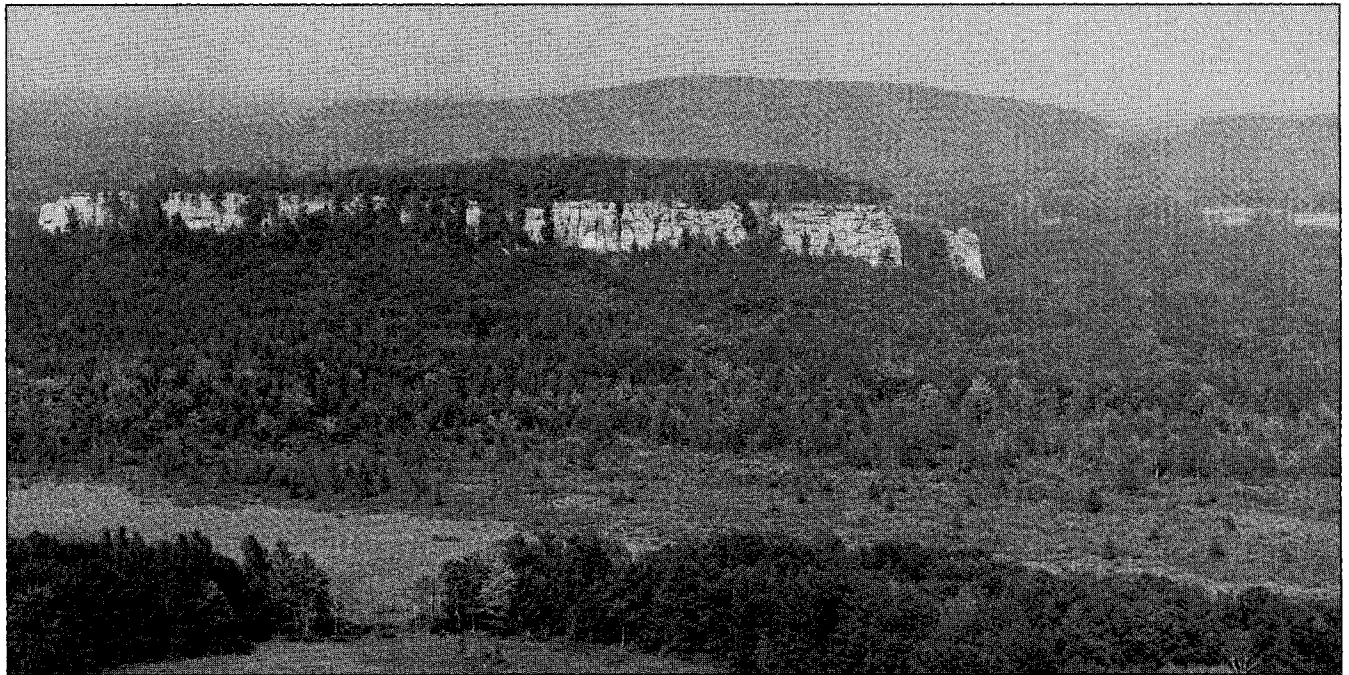
terminal moraine--runs through the county. It enters Adams County from the east just south of where County Hwy J meets the Marquette County line. Then it proceeds southwest, passing between Grand Marsh and Patrick's Lake, then winds south along a line wavering from one-quarter mile to

two miles east of County Highway B all the way to the Columbia County line.

The moraine is a boundary line in the county, separating soils and drainage. West of the moraine, the soils are less fertile and the streams run to the Wisconsin River. East of the moraine, the soils are



Above: The terminal or end moraine of the Green Bay lobe of the last Ice Age glacier halted its advance in eastern Adams County and is easily visible from County M as depicted here. Below: Lone Rock as viewed from Quincy Bluff with Rattlesnake Rock in the distance and the Quincy marshes in between.



more fertile and the streams run south and east to the Fox River. West of the moraine, Adams County is part of the non-glaciated Driftless Area that extends all the way to the Mississippi River; east of the moraine, Adams County is part of the glaciated eastern Wisconsin that reaches to the

shores of Lake Michigan.

As a result of the most ancient and more recent forces of earth, Adams County has a unique landscape of flatland broken by bluffs--all made of sand.

From Past To Present: The History of Adams County - Link Page

Previous	Introduction	5
Next	Native People	12

[Return to Electronic Index Page](#)