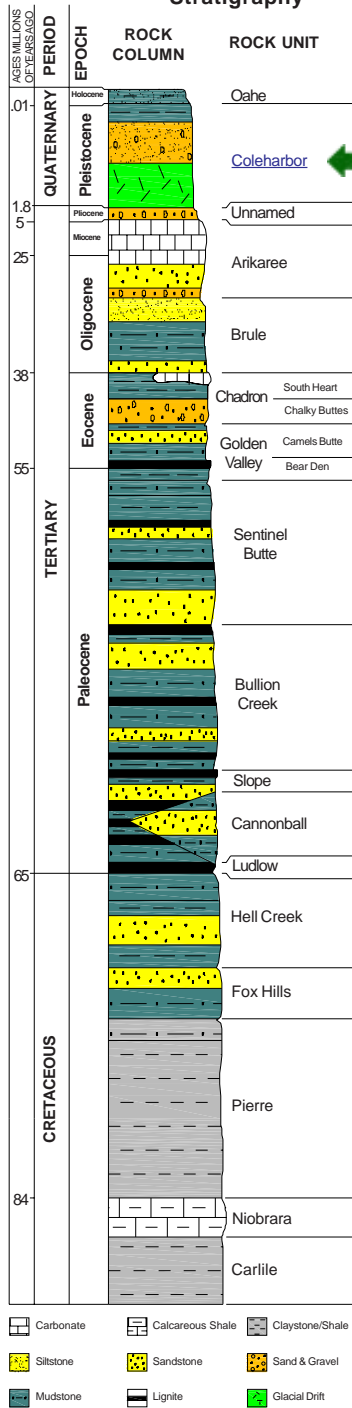


North Dakota Stratigraphy



THE GREAT ICE AGE

The last Great Ice Age, which began about 1.6 million years ago, dramatically affected the geology and life of North Dakota. Glaciers advanced into North Dakota from Canada on numerous occasions and extended as far south as the Missouri River during the last major glacial advance. When the glaciers melted, the sediment incorporated in the ice was deposited. Fossils of the animals that lived during the Ice Age are found in these deposits including remains of mammoths, mastodons, giant bison, ground sloths, and horses. Spruce-aspen forests grew in North Dakota between 13,000 and 8,500 years ago. Fossils found in pond and bog sediments indicate that cold-adapted frogs, fish, insects, crustaceans, mollusks, plants, and small mammals, including beavers, inhabited the area. Artifacts indicate that the first people to reside in North Dakota were here by 11,000 years ago. They were big game hunters preying on mammoths and other large mammals. Climate became warmer and drier between 8,500 and 4,500 years ago, and the spruce-aspen forests were replaced by prairie habitats. The kinds of plants and animals that live in North Dakota today became established at that time.



Glacial till overlying the Sentinel Butte Formation (Paleocene), shore of Lake Sakakawea near Sakakawea State Park, Mercer County. Bank is 36 m high. View is to the northwest.