Base by U.S. Geological Survey, 1966

Universal Transverse Mercator projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Alaska coordinate system, zone 3
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 6

TRUE NORTH
MAGNETIC NORTH
APPROXIMATE MEAN DECLINATION, 1975

SCALE 1:24 000

1 ½ 0 1 MILE

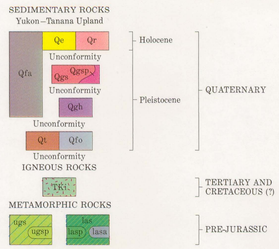
1 .5 0 1 KILOMETRE

CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Geology modified from Péwé (1958). Bedrock geology by R. B. Forbes and F. R. Weber, 1972–73; surficial geology by T. L. Péwé and J. W. Bell, 1972–73

CORRELATION OF MAP UNITS



DESCRIPTION OF MAP UNITS

A blanket of loess of Quaternary age, a few inches to several hundred feet thick, covers nearly all the quadrangle. This loess is not shown on the map where less than 3 feet thick.

SEDIMENTARY ROCKS

Qe — ENGINEER LOESS (Shown in cross section only) – Massive homogeneous unconsolidated eolian silt on middle slopes. Well sorted, less than 10 percent clay; grains angular; consists mostly of quartz, feldspar, and mica; locally cemented by iron oxide; local calcareous horizons. Buff to gray-tan when dry, brown when wet. Locally mottled by iron staining and carbonaceous material. Weakly bedded; 3–25 feet thick. Free of permafrost except on lower part of middle slopes where it grades into the Ready Bullion Formation and unconformably overlies the Goldstream Formation. No vertebrate fossils of extinct animals. Contains thin white vitric volcanic ash layer. Not differentiated from Ready Bullion Formation on map

Qr — READY BULLION FORMATION – Massive homogeneous unconsolidated eolian silt; reworked and retransported to lower slopes and valley bottoms; locally referred to as "muck." Unconformably overlies Goldstream Formation; grades upslope into Engineer Loess. Well sorted, less than 10 percent clay; locally contains layers and lenses of sand and gravel. Grains angular; consists mostly of quartz, feldspar, and mica; locally cemented by iron oxide. Contains abundant organic matter in valley bottoms as plant fragments, peat lenses, sticks, logs, and rooted stumps. Silt poorly to well stratified; 3–30 feet thick, thinning upslope. Gray to black when frozen, tan when thawed; locally mottled by iron staining. Silt is perennially frozen and contains ice seams and lenses as much as ½ inch thick. No large ice masses; no vertebrate fossils of extinct animals

Qfa — FAIRBANKS LOESS – Massive homogeneous unconsolidated eolian silt on upper slopes and hilltops. Thickness 3–200 feet. Well sorted, less than 10 percent clay; grains angular; consists mostly of quartz, feldspar, and mica; locally cemented by iron oxide; locally calcareous; tan to tan-gray when dry, brown when wet. Locally contains dark carbonaceous layers and iron-oxide-stained bands. Contains at least two white vitric volcanic ash layers ½ inch to 6 inches thick. Generally free of permafrost. Remains of Illinoian through Holocene land mammals present. On lower slopes and valley bottoms grades into Gold Hill Loess, Goldstream Formation, and Engineer Loess. Unconformably overlies Cripple Gravel and Tanana Formation and pre-Quaternary bedrock

Qgs — GOLDSTREAM FORMATION – Massive homogeneous unconsolidated organic eolian silt; reworked and retransported from upper slopes to lower slopes and valley bottoms. Locally referred to as "muck." Unconformably overlies Fox Gravel in valley bottoms and Tanana Formation and Gold Hill Loess on lower slopes; unconformably overlain by Ready Bullion Formation and Engineer Loess; grades upslope into Fairbanks Loess. Well sorted, less than 10 percent clay. Grains angular; consists mostly of quartz, feldspar, and mica; locally cemented by iron oxide; locally calcareous. Contains abundant organic material as minute carbonized fragments and some peat lenses, sticks, twigs, and logs. Pleistocene (Wisconsinan) vertebrate fossils abundant, including frozen partial carcasses of extinct species. Silt is poorly to fairly well stratified; 10 to more than 300 feet thick, thinning upslope. Gray to black to greenish black when frozen, tan when thawed. Deposit is perennially frozen and contains ice seams and lenses as much as ½ inch thick; large (1–50 feet in diameter) ice wedges in upper part; top of ice masses truncated at contact with overlying Ready Bullion Formation. Ice masses form polygonal pattern 25–100 feet in diameter on surface. Large masses of pingo ice locally present. Contains one thin white vitric volcanic ash layer near middle of deposit

Qgsp — Peat and silt – Perennially frozen, with high ice content as lenses and seams. Polygonal pattern on surface. Composed of dense undecomposed plant remains, mostly *Sphagnum* mosses. Brown to black

Qgh — GOLD HILL LOESS (Shown in cross section only) – Massive homogeneous unconsolidated eolian silt in valley bottoms and on lower slopes; exposed only in walls of excavations. Well sorted, less than 10 percent clay; grains angular; consists mostly of quartz, feldspar, and mica; many thin iron-oxide-stained and carbonaceous horizons. Brown or green when frozen, tan when thawed; 3–65 feet thick. Contains conspicuous folds and contortions or fault blocks 6–100 feet across. Unconformably overlain by Goldstream Formation; grades upslope into Fairbanks Loess. Vertebrate fossils common. Contains two thin white vitric volcanic ash layers. Locally unfrozen but generally perennially frozen with low to moderate ice content. Age is Illinoian

Qt — TANANA FORMATION (Shown in cross section only) – Widespread solifluction layer on hilltops and slopes consisting of angular, fractured, and weathered bedrock in a silty sand matrix; early Quaternary in age; locally referred to as "slide rock." Crops out in roadcuts and gravel pits. Poorly stratified and unsorted; elongate or platy fragments oriented parallel to surface. Deposit 3–75 feet thick; greatest thicknesses at base of slopes. Composition varies depending on local bedrock; may range from grus to greasy clay to the most common local platy rock fragments. Unconformably overlain by Gold Hill and Fairbanks Loess; grades downslope into Fox Gravel. Perennially frozen on lower slopes and valley bottoms

Qfo — FOX GRAVEL – As mapped, formation is placer-mine dredge tailings. Undisturbed deposit is buried except where exposed in walls of excavations. Undisturbed deposit is an auriferous valley-bottom accumulation of solifluction material reworked by stream action; early or middle Pleistocene age; does not include modern creek gravel. Consists of poorly sorted, angular, sandy, gravel fragments 1–6 inches in diameter with some cobbles 10 inches or larger; poorly to fairly well stratified with lenses of silt and sand as much as 3 feet thick and 7 feet long. Gravel clasts are imbricate in places; they consist of quartz-mica schist, phyllite, slate, gneiss, quartz, quartzite, and igneous rocks. Composition varies depending on local bedrock. Deposit 1–100 feet thick. Color tan owing to iron staining. Unconformably overlain by Gold Hill Loess and Goldstream Formation; unconformably overlies schist and intrusive rocks; grades upslope into Tanana Formation. In most creeks, gravel lies on 1–6 feet of auriferous yellowish to bluish clay. Locally perennially frozen, with little ground ice. Bones of bison and mammoth present but rare

IGNEOUS ROCKS

TKi — ALTERED DIKE ROCK – Gray to yellowish-brown porphyritic medium-grained granitic rock composed mainly of quartz and feldspar. Highly weathered

METAMORPHIC ROCKS

METAMORPHIC ROCKS OF THE UPPER GREENSCHIST FACIES, UNDIVIDED

ugs, ugsp — Pelitic schist and micaceous quartzite – Typical mineral assemblages in these rocks are quartz-albite-muscovite (±garnet, biotite) and quartz-sericite (±albite). Contains subordinate calc-mica schist and calc-phyllite in which the typical mineral assemblages are carbonate-quartz-sericite (±phlogopite) and quartz-carbonate-albite (±sericite), respectively

METAMORPHIC ROCKS OF THE LOWER GARNET-AMPHIBOLITE FACIES, UNDIVIDED

las, lasp — Pelitic schist and micaceous quartzite – Typical mineral assemblages in these rocks are quartz-muscovite-oligoclase (±garnet), quartz-muscovite-biotite-garnet (±K-feldspar), and quartz-muscovite (±albite). Contains subordinate amphibolite, marble and biotite paragneiss in which the typical mineral assemblages are: amphibolite, hornblende-oligoclase-quartz (±garnet) and hornblende-oligoclase-quartz-epidote (±biotite); marble, carbonate-quartz (±phlogopite, muscovite); and paragneiss, quartz-muscovite-biotite-oligoclase-K-feldspar (±garnet)

lasa — Amphibolite – Typical mineral assemblages are hornblende-oligoclase-quartz (±garnet), hornblende-oligoclase-quartz-epidote (±biotite), and hornblende-carbonate-quartz-epidote. Contains intercalated layers of tremolite-bearing marble and pelitic schist in which the typical mineral assemblages are as follows: marble, carbonate-quartz-tremolite and carbonate-quartz; pelitic schist, quartz-biotite-muscovite-oligoclase (±garnet)

Note.–Commonly used geologic symbols are printed on the map jacket; a separately printed list is available on request from the U.S. Geological Survey

GEOLOGY OF THE FAIRBANKS D-2 NW QUADRANGLE, ALASKA

INTRODUCTION

The Fairbanks D-2 NW quadrangle, an area of about 60 square miles, is in central Alaska approximately 100 miles south of the Arctic Circle. It includes the Fairbanks metropolitan area (population 45,864, 1970), the second largest city in the State and the principal trade center of the interior. It is strategically located with respect to the highway and railroad net of Alaska and is one of the main hubs for air travel. Fort Wainwright is adjacent to Fairbanks on the east, and the University of Alaska is 3 miles to the west.

PHYSICAL SETTING

Physiography

Fairbanks is on the north side of the broad Tanana River valley near the base of the hills that constitute part of the Yukon-Tanana Upland, a northwest-trending highland between the Yukon and Tanana Rivers. The Yukon-Tanana Upland is within a larger area of rolling country in central Alaska between the Brooks and Alaska Ranges. It is a maturely dissected area of accordant, rounded ridges 2,000 to 3,000 feet in altitude; scattered discontinuous groups of higher mountains project above the upland ridges to altitudes of 5,000 to 6,000 feet. In the Fairbanks D-2 NW quadrangle, however, the upland hills lie at or below 2100 feet in altitude.

South of the Yukon-Tanana Upland lies the wide Tanana lowland, a sediment-filled trough between the upland on the north and the towering Alaska Range on the south. Huge alluvial fans extend northward from the mountains forcing the Tanana River to flow along the north edge of the lowland.

Central Alaska has not been glaciated except in small local mountain masses, but glaciers from the Brooks Range on the north, the Alaska Range on the south, and the Yukon Plateau on the east almost surrounded the interior of Alaska during times of glacial maxima. Glaciers from the Alaska Range probably approached within 50 miles of Fairbanks, and during these glacial advances, the heavily loaded rivers deposited several hundred feet of silt, sand, and gravel in the Tanana and Yukon valleys. Aggradation of the trunk valleys raised base level and caused tributaries from the unglaciated Yukon-Tanana Upland to aggrade their lower valleys. As much as 300 feet of sediment was deposited in creek valleys of the upland in the vicinity of Fairbanks. Loess, ranging in thickness from a few feet on ridge and hilltops to 200 feet on middle slopes, blankets ridges of the upland.

GEOLOGIC HISTORY

The oldest rock units exposed in the Fairbanks D-2 NW quadrangle are the metamorphic rocks of the Yukon-Tanana complex (King, 1969) which were formerly included within the Birch Creek Schist (Mertie, 1937). The metamorphic terrane is dominantly composed of pelitic schist and micaceous quartzite, with subordinate calc-mica schist, amphibolite and marble. Although these rocks were formerly believed to be of Precambrian age, recent potassium-argon age determinations have shown that the crystalline schists were recrystallized in Jurassic time. Discordant K^{40}/Ar^{40} biotite and hornblende ages indicate that a subsequent thermal disturbance occurred in the Cretaceous and was associated with an episode of granitic plutonism that ranged from Cretaceous to early Tertiary. Lode-gold mineralization is related to the emplacement of small granodiorite and quartz monzonite plutons in the Fairbanks gold belt at that time.

Although the Tertiary record in interior Alaska is imperfectly known, it is believed that continental Tertiary sediments and local lava flows once covered much of the Yukon-Tanana Upland. After orogenic movements, erosion removed most of these sediments from the upland during later Tertiary time. Only small outcrops of continental Tertiary rocks, including basalt flows and breccias, are known to occur in the Fairbanks area.

A complex series of events took place in late Cenozoic time. The deposits show a record of alternating deposition and erosion of silt and gravel, the formation and destruction of permafrost, and climatic fluctuations ranging from a warmer climate than exists now to one colder than the present. In Pliocene and Pleistocene time, gold placers were formed in creek valleys of the upland; later, much gravel alluviation occurred in these valleys. These gold and gravel deposits were named the Cripple Gravel (Péwé, 1975b). This early period of gravel deposition was followed by erosion and removal of most of the coarse angular local gravel. Streams reconcentrated much of the gold from the earlier placer deposits and deposited additional gold placers. Most of the stream channels of the second gold concentration are offset from the location of the earlier channels, and some of the first placer accumulations still exist as fragmentary bench deposits. The deposits from the second cycle of gravel alluviation were named the Fox Gravel by Péwé (1975b). Both the Cripple and Fox Gravels represent deposits formed during a period of rigorous climate in Pliocene and Pleistocene time. Solifluction deposits on hillsides and accumulation of stream-washed solifluction debris in valley bottoms were produced in glacial times. The Cripple and Fox Gravels are valley-bottom accumulations of solifluction materials. Stream action has carried the debris short distances and winnowed out some of the fine fractions. The widespread inactive solifluction layer that exists on almost all lower slopes in unglaciated central Alaska, termed the Tanana Formation by Péwé (1975 b), grades into the Fox Gravel in valley bottoms.

In later Quaternary time the hills were blanketed with loess (windblown silt) derived from flood plains of the Tanana River and glacial outwash plains south of the Fairbanks D-2 NW quadrangle. Much of the loess was retransported to valley bottoms, incorporated with much organic debris, including vertebrate remains, and became perennially frozen. This early accumulation of silt occurred in Illinoian time. Much of the loess and most of the valley-bottom silt was removed during Sangamon time. It is thought that permafrost thawed and perhaps disappeared during this warm interval. The loess of Illinoian age that lies on lower valley-bottom slopes is the Gold Hill Loess, and that which is undifferentiated from younger loesses on upper hill slopes and hilltops is the Fairbanks Loess (Péwé, 1975 b).

In Wisconsin time more loess was deposited on the hills and valleys of the uplands; organic silt accumulated in valley bottoms, became frozen, and large ground-ice masses formed. Abundant mammal remains, including partial carcasses, became entombed in the frozen organic silt. The valley-bottom facies of Wisconsinan silt was named the Goldstream Formation (Péwé, 1975b). About 10,000 years ago a slight warming of the climate caused a small amount of permafrost to thaw. At this time the taiga forest returned to central Alaska and replaced a mainly tundra environment, home of many now-extinct Pleistocene mammals. In the last 10,000 years additional loess was deposited on the hillsides and organic silt was formed in the valley bottoms. The organic valley-bottom silt of retransported Holocene loess has been named the Ready Bullion Formation; the uphill facies on the middle slopes, the Engineer Loess (Péwé, 1975b). On hilltops the Holocene loess has been grouped with the Fairbanks Loess. After the warming trend of 10,000 years ago, the climate has not become cold enough to permit reactivation or continued growth of the now-dormant buried ice wedges that grew in Wisconsinan time.

During Quaternary time, probably mainly from Illinoian to the present, the sedimentary fill of the Tanana Valley was modified by alternating periods of erosion and deposition with the formation and destruction of permafrost. This sedimentary fill was named the Chena Alluvium (Péwé, 1975b); information is not available, however, to permit reconstruction of a detailed history.

ENVIRONMENTAL GEOLOGY

To provide a background to people concerned with the land, basic data from this geologic map have been recast into other land-use maps that present information concerning foundation problems, flooding, land subsidence, problems with frozen ground, excavation problems, availability of ground water, depth to the water table, and general land-use information.

A companion map (MF–668A, Péwé and Bell, 1975a) outlines frozen-ground conditions in the quadrangle to assist land users in evaluating problems that may be encountered in developing the land.

Information on foundation problems in certain land areas is presented in companion map MF–668D (Péwé and Bell, 1975 d); in map MF–668C (Péwé and Bell, 1975 c), location and possible uses of various geologic construction materials such as sand and gravel, riprap, peat, and other natural materials are outlined.

At the present time all domestic and industrial sources for water are from ground water in the area. Map MF–668B (Péwé and Bell, 1975 b) outlines the availability of ground water in three major areas – the flood plain, the creek valley bottoms, and the middle slopes and hilltops. Depth to the water table is also presented.

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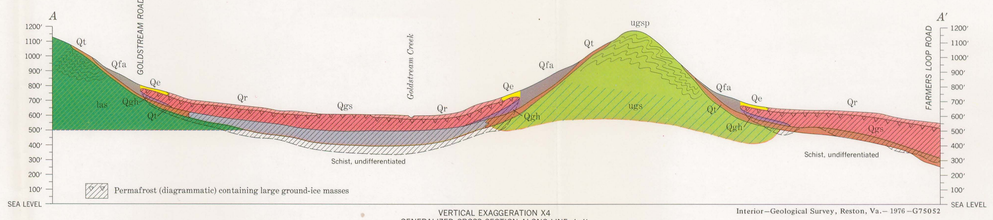

VERTICAL EXAGGERATION X4
GENERALIZED CROSS SECTION ALONG LINE *A–A'*

Interior—Geological Survey, Reston, Va.—1976—G75052

GEOLOGIC MAP OF THE FAIRBANKS D-2 NW QUADRANGLE, ALASKA

By
Troy L. Péwé, John W. Bell, Robert B. Forbes,
and Florence R. Weber
1975

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