

QUATERNARY STRATIGRAPHY

By

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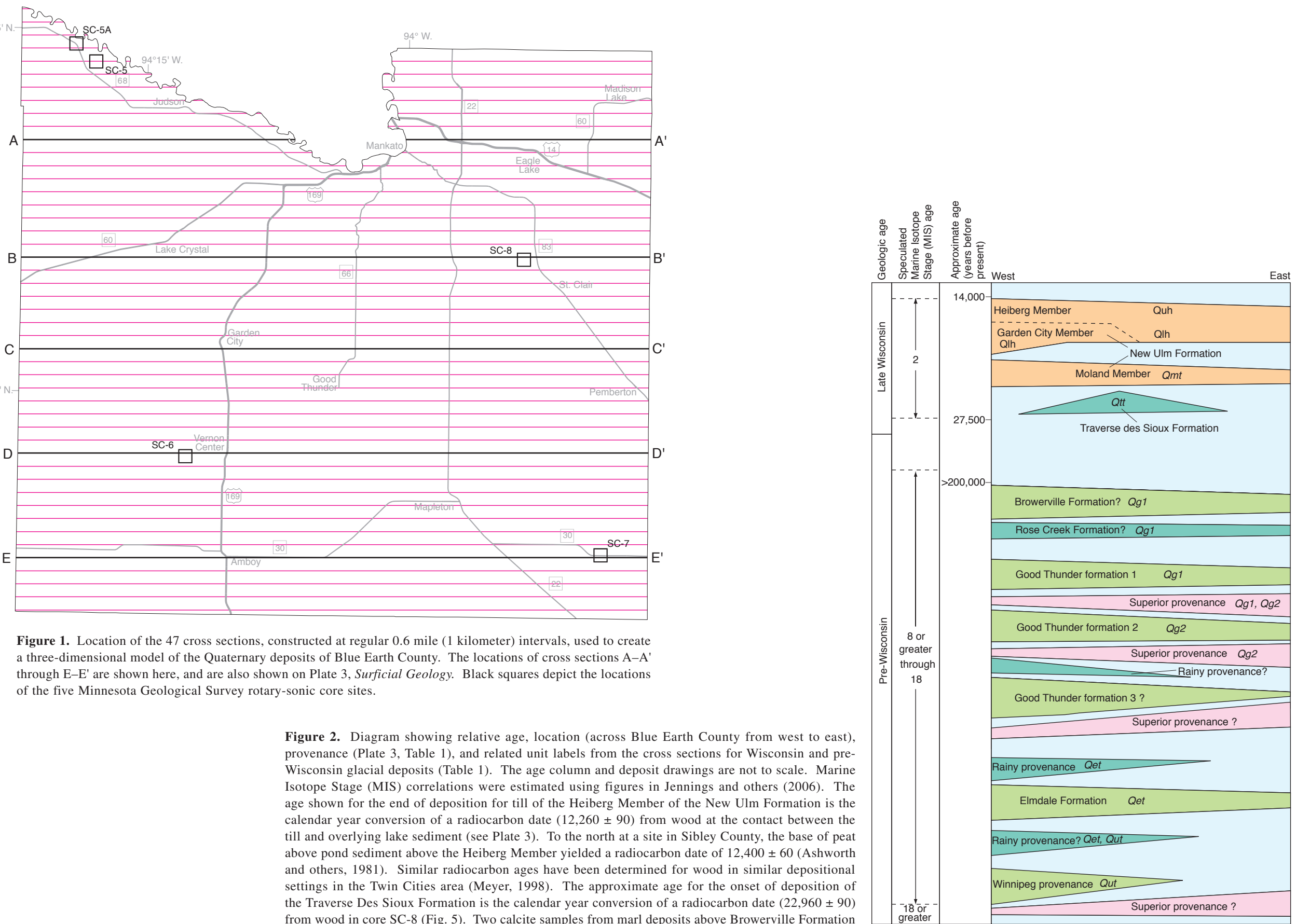
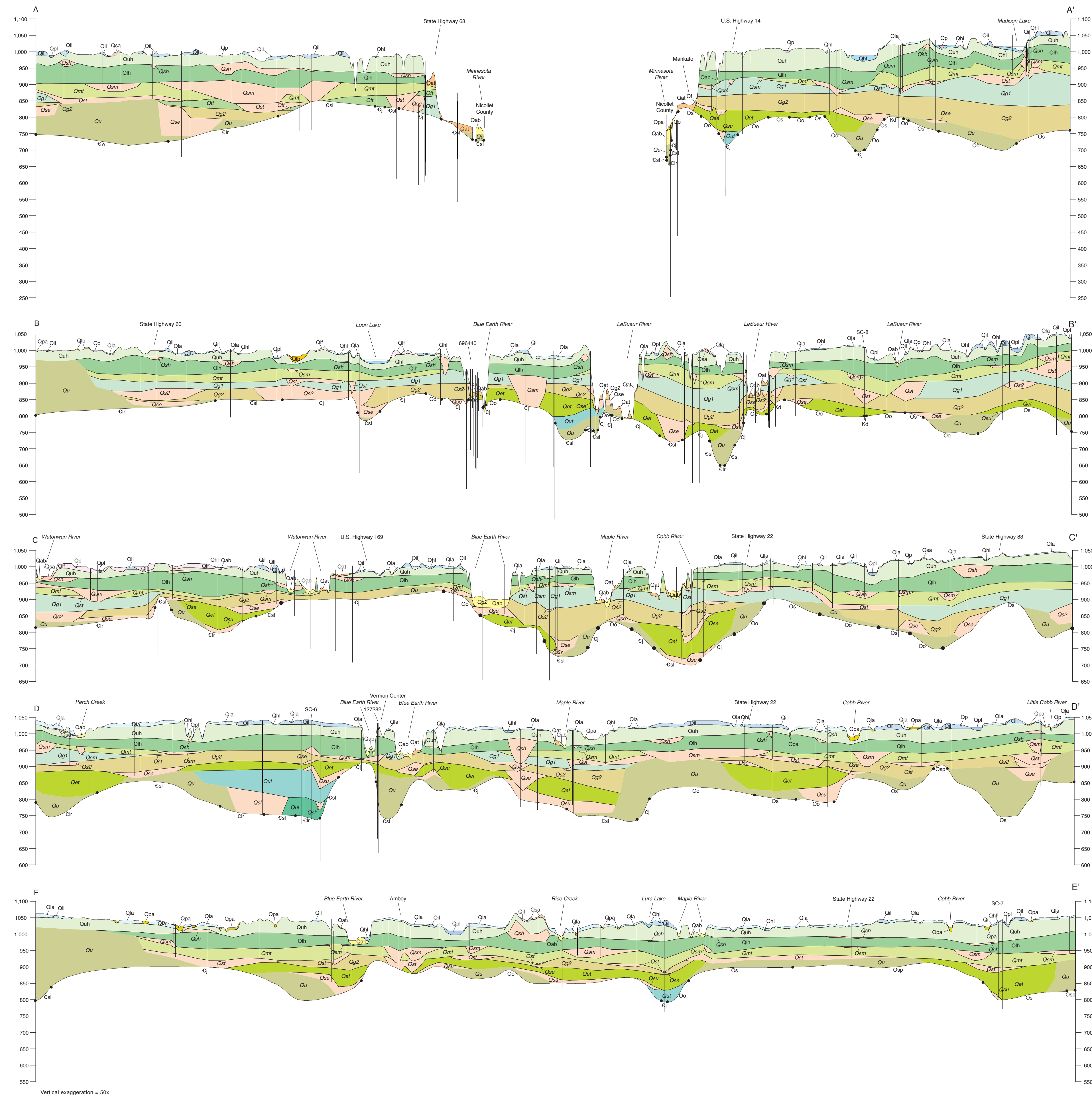


Figure 2. Diagram showing relative age, location (across Blue Earth County from west to east), provenance (Plate 3, Table 1), and related unit labels from the cross sections for Wisconsin and Pre-Wisconsin glacial deposits (Table 1). The age column and deposit drawings are not to scale. Marine Isotope Stage (MIS) correlations were estimated using figures in Jennings and others (2006). The age shows for the end of deposition for till of the Heberg Member of the New Ulm Formation is the calendar year conversion of a radiocarbon date (12,260 ± 90) from wood in core SC-4 (Fig. 5). Two calcic samples from marl deposits above Browerville Formation till in Todd County in central Minnesota had an uranium series minimum age of 200,000 years before present (Knable and Meyer, 2007). All core samples from the area that have undergone detrital remnant magnetization analysis at the Institute for Rock Magnetism at the University of Minnesota have yielded normal polarity, indicating they were likely deposited after the Brunhes normal-Matuyama reversed polarity boundary, dated at 780,000 years B.P., and thus no older than MIS 18. However, the oldest deposits may have been laid down during the relatively brief Jaramillo normal polarity event dated at over 1 million years ago, which is correlated with MIS stages 28-30 (Lisiecki and Raymo, 2005).

INTRODUCTION

The Quaternary Stratigraphy plate shows the unconsolidated sediment expected to be encountered between the land surface and bedrock in Blue Earth County. Cross sections A-A' through E-E' are representative of 47 cross sections (Fig. 1) that were constructed to create a three-dimensional model of the Quaternary deposits of Blue Earth County. The major sand bodies from this model are depicted on Plate 5, *Sand Distribution Model*, the full model and all the cross sections used to develop it can be accessed through the digital files of the Minnesota Geological Survey. The geologic units shown on the cross sections were defined using outcrops, auger samples, drill core, drilling cuttings, and water-well boring logs (Plate 1, *Data Base Map*), and by compiling the results of previous work in the area (see references on Plate 3). Some units match those on Plate 3, *Surface Geology*, some new units appear only on the cross sections, and others for simplification purposes are a combination of multiple units from Plate 3. Vertical exaggeration is 5x for all cross sections.

Figure 2 is a schematic illustration showing the relationships among age, provenance, stratigraphic position, and location of the sediments deposited by major glacial events (see Plate 3). Analysis of the texture and clast types of the Quaternary sediments was done for selected geologic units, as listed in Table 1. Logs of three of the rotary-sonic core drilled for the Minnesota Geological Survey by Miller Drilling Company of Lawrenceville, Tennessee, are shown in Figures 3 to 5.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mick Johnson, formerly of Gustavus Adolphus College and now of the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, made many contributions to our understanding of the stratigraphy of the area, as have several of his former students (for example Gramstad, 1997). Alan Forberg and his staff at the Blue Earth County Public Works Department granted access to county bridge boring records. Thanks are extended to Dr. Stephen Alex, Terry Carlson, Michael Doepere, Brian Loeffler, and Roger Volz, landowners who allowed rotary-sonic drilling on their property, and to all gravel pit operators and landowners who gave permission to examine exposures on their property.

DESCRIPTION OF CROSS SECTION UNITS

Each unit description on the cross sections is placed in one of three categories, as indicated in parentheses after the description: 1. *Surface Geology* unit—unit having an identical description, label, and color as on Plate 3, *Surface Geology*. See Plate 3 for detailed descriptions. 2. Modified unit—multiple units from Plate 3 combined into one unit on the cross sections. 3. New unit—unit that appears only on the cross sections that has a unique label and color. Some surficial geologic deposits crossed by the section line are too small or thin to show on the cross section, including all colluvium (Ct).

Key stratigraphic control points, such as rotary-sonic drill holes completed by the Minnesota Geological Survey and analyzed cuttings sets collected by water well drillers are differentiated on the cross sections and have an associated unique number on file at the Minnesota Geological Survey. Drill samples and outcrops along the many river valleys in Blue Earth County have established the presence of a number of subsurface deposits that predate those of the last glaciation, the Late Wisconsin (Fig. 2, Table 1), but other than those of the informally named Good Thunder Formation, they have been highly eroded and are discontinuous across most of the county. Distinguishing individual units from water well records, the primary subsurface data base, is difficult, so the pre-Wisconsin episode units have been combined as described below. Detailed descriptions of those units that have been formally named can be found in Johnson and others (in press).

QUATERNARY

Holocene deposits

Qp Organic debris, clay, and silt (Surface Geology unit)
Qf Loamy sand and gravel sand (Surface Geology unit)
Qh Silt to clay (Surface Geology unit)
Qhp Organic sediments over silt to clay (modified unit)—A combination of map units Qp and Qf from Plate 3 where too thin or complex to map separately.
Qhp Organic sediments and/or sand, silt, and clay (modified unit)—A combination of map units Qp and Qf from Plate 3 where too thin or complex to map separately.

Holocene and Pleistocene deposits

Qab Sand, loamy sand, and gravel (modified unit)—A combination of map unit Qfb and coarse-grained portions of unit Qa from Plate 3. Fine-grained gravels in places, but generally sandy-textured.
Qat Sand and gravelly sand with silt and clay (Surface Geology unit)

Pleistocene deposits of Late Wisconsin glaciation

New Ulm Formation—Light olive-brown to dark gray, bedded sediment and clay loam to sandy loam-textured diamict of northwestern (Riding Mountain) provenance, deposited by the Wadena lobe and its meltwater (Fig. 6). The formation crops out in several locations in the Mankato area, but there is no clear evidence the Wadena lobe extended further south. Oxidized sand and gravel encountered below till of the New Ulm Formation in core SC-8 (Fig. 5) is tentatively assigned to the Traverse des Sioux Formation due to its lack of sand. Plant fragments from the silt bed below gave a radiocarbon date of 22,960 ± 60 years B.P. (Beta-28281). The silt yielded pollen that was "...consistent with the time just before the last glacial maximum, when spruce was abundant in Minnesota adjacent to (and on) the ice sheet" (Viana Stefanova, 2011, unpub. data). Lithologically similar sand and gravel below the silt bed in core SC-8 may also have been deposited by Wadena lobe meltwater, implying that the radiocarbon date is a minimum date for the advance of the Wadena lobe into the area (Fig. 2).

Sandy till (new unit)—Dense, gravelly to rocky in places. Shale clasts are rare in the very coarse-grained (1-2 millimeter) sand fraction (Fig. 7, Table 1). This beds of silt to gravel within the unit are common in places.

Sand and gravel (new unit)—Deposited primarily by meltwater of the Wadena lobe, but may include older sediment of both Winnipeg and Superior provenances.

Good Thunder Formation—Light olive-brown to dark gray, bedded sediment and loam, to clay loam-textured diamict of northwestern (Riding Mountain) provenance. The formation is deposited by the Wadena lobe and its meltwater (Fig. 6). The formation crops out in several locations in the Mankato area, but there is no clear evidence the Wadena lobe extended further south. Oxidized sand and gravel encountered below till of the New Ulm Formation in core SC-8 (Fig. 5) is tentatively assigned to the Traverse des Sioux Formation due to its lack of sand. Plant fragments from the silt bed below gave a radiocarbon date of 22,960 ± 60 years B.P. (Beta-28281). The silt yielded pollen that was "...consistent with the time just before the last glacial maximum, when spruce was abundant in Minnesota adjacent to (and on) the ice sheet" (Viana Stefanova, 2011, unpub. data). Lithologically similar sand and gravel below the silt bed in core SC-8 may also have been deposited by Wadena lobe meltwater, implying that the radiocarbon date is a minimum date for the advance of the Wadena lobe into the area (Fig. 2).

CROSS SECTION SYMBOLS

Geologic contact—Approximate. No-line boundaries occur where data are insufficient to reliably extend units. Dots at the base of the Quaternary section denote bedrock contacts (as depicted on Plate 2, *Bedrock Geology*). Where bedrock occurs at the surface, it is depicted as unit *Px* on Plate 3, *Surface Geology*.

Drill hole—Well records from the County Well Index. The top of the drill hole may not coincide with the cross section elevation line because the point is located near (within 0.5 mile [0.5 kilometer]) but not on the cross-section line and therefore may have a different surface elevation.

UNDIFFERENTIATED QUATERNARY DEPOSITS

Qd Undifferentiated sediment (new unit)—Includes till and bedded clay, silt, sand, and gravel. Shown in areas where control data were scarce or absent.

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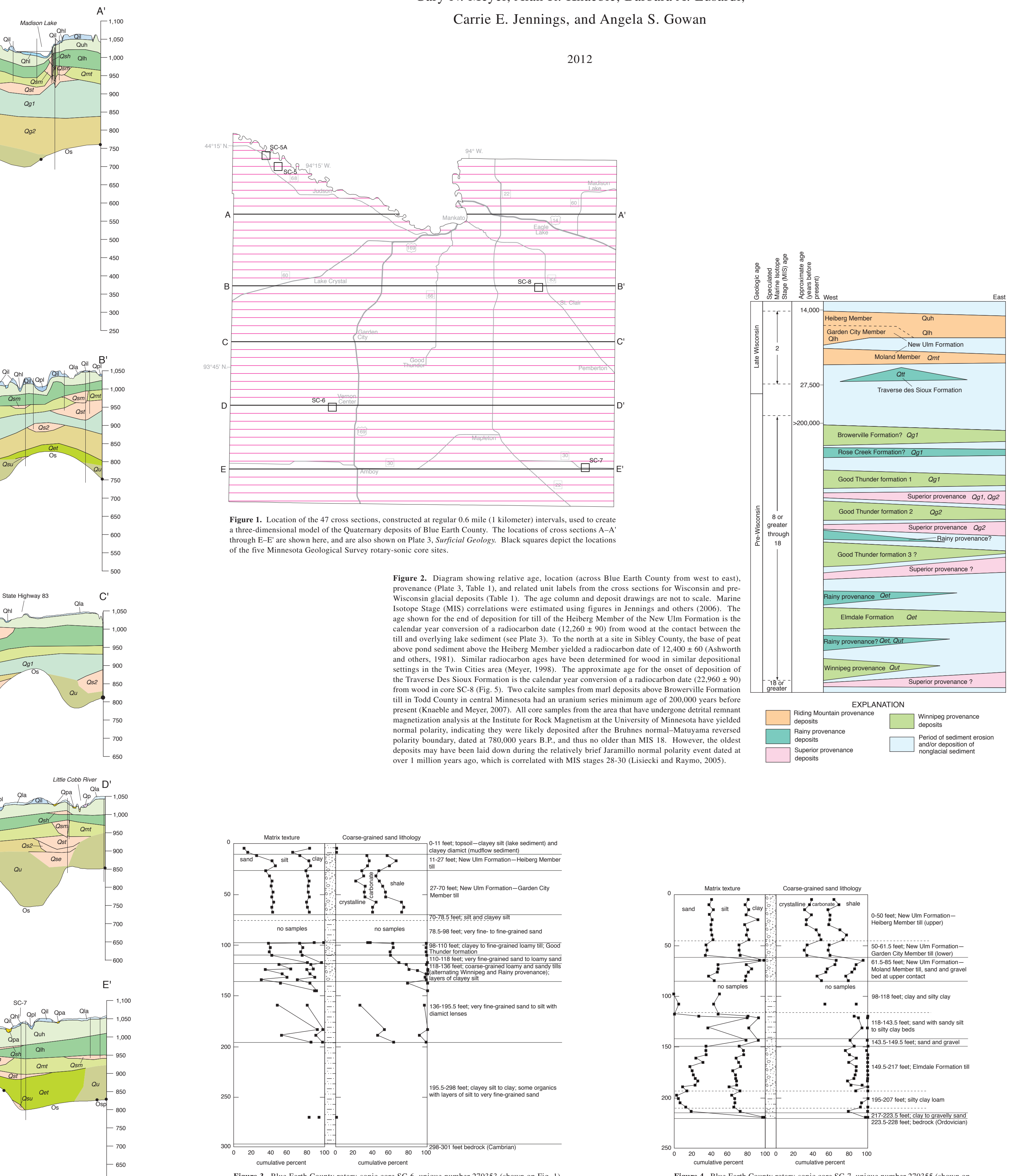


Figure 3. Blue Earth County rotary-sonic core SC-6, unique number 270353 (shown on Fig. 1). Collected at T. 106 N., R. 28 W., sec. 29, elevation 1,041 feet. Under coarse-grained sand lithology, with reference to Table 1, crystalline is the same as Precambrian, carbonate includes both Paleozoic and Cretaceous carbonate, and shale is the shale portion of the Cretaceous category.

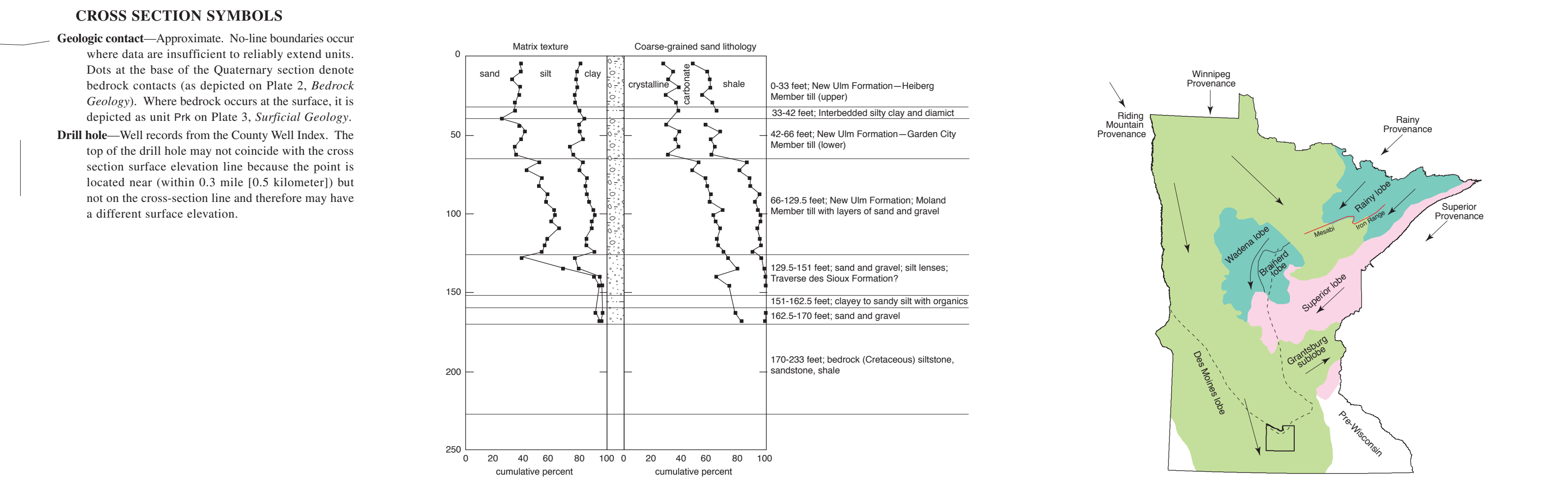


Figure 4. Blue Earth County rotary-sonic core SC-7, unique number 270355 (shown on Fig. 1). Collected at T. 105 N., R. 25 W., sec. 15, elevation 1,032 feet. Under coarse-grained sand lithology, with reference to Table 1, crystalline is the same as Precambrian, carbonate includes both Paleozoic and Cretaceous carbonate, and shale is the shale portion of the Cretaceous category.

