

INTRODUCTION

Surficial materials in the Perth Amboy and Arthur Kill quadrangles consist of glacial, marine, and weathered bedrock sediment. The glacial sediment includes sand, gravel, silt, and clay laid down by meltwater in glacial lakes and river plains, and till laid down by glacial ice as a sheet on the bedrock surface and in the terminal moraine. The sand, gravel, silt, and clay known collectively as stratified drift, are as much as 70 feet thick. Till is as much as 130 feet thick. The stream sediment includes sand, gravel, and silt deposited in floodplains, stream terraces, and former river plains. It is as much as 40 feet thick. The weathered bedrock consists of silt, clay, and shale. Fragments of bedrock are scattered in the weathered bedrock, and some fragments are cemented together by chemical weathering. The weathered bedrock consists of silt, clay, and shale. Fragments of bedrock are scattered in the weathered bedrock, and some fragments are cemented together by chemical weathering.

The accompanying map and sections show the surface extent and subsurface relations of these deposits. Figure 1 shows the extent of glacial lakes and river plains, the terminal moraine, and recessional ice margins. Table 1 lists water wells and their logs used in the surficial geology study. Table 2 lists the composition of pebbles in the glacial deposits. The correlation chart shows the temporal relationships and age of the deposits.

DESCRIPTION OF MAP UNITS

**Postglacial Deposits**—These include artificial fill, stream, alluvial, and beach sediment deposited since retreat of the late Wisconsinan glacier. Wetland and swamp deposits begin to accumulate shortly after deglaciation. Estuarine and sub-marine deposits begin to accumulate as rising sea level entered the Raritan Valley. This occurred as early as 11,500 radiocarbon years before present (ys B. P.) as indicated by a radiocarbon date of 14,200±50 ys B. P. (GX-2167) on organic clay at the base of the estuarine deposit at a depth of 98-100 feet in a boring adjacent to boring 139 (table 1) (Lippincott, Jacobs, and Gonda, Inc., 1995, boring R2).

**ARTIFICIAL FILL**—Excavated sand, silt, clay, gravel, rock, and fill, and man-made materials (bricks, cinders, ash, slag, glass, construction materials) laid down by man. Gravel and sand composition similar to that of surficial deposits and outcropping bedrock in the drainage basin. Fine sediment is deposited as overbank material on the floodplain and may be as much as 15 feet thick. It generally overlies sand and gravel deposited in the stream channel. The gravel is generally less than 5 feet thick.

**TRASH FILL**—Trash and construction materials mixed and covered with excavated clay, silt, sand, gravel, rock, and till. As much as 50 feet thick.

**BEACH DEPOSIT**—Sand and pebble gravel. As much as 15 feet thick (estimated).

**ALLUVIUM**—Sand, silt, clay, pebble gravel, minor cobble gravel. Contains variable amounts of organic matter. Fine sediment is reddish-brown to dark brown. Gravel and sand composition similar to that of surficial deposits and outcropping bedrock in the drainage basin. Fine sediment is deposited as overbank material on the floodplain and may be as much as 15 feet thick. It generally overlies sand and gravel deposited in the stream channel. The gravel is generally less than 5 feet thick.

**SWAMP AND MARSH DEPOSITS**—Gray to brown organic silt and clay, overlain by dark-brown to black peat. As much as 15 feet thick (estimated).

**ESTUARINE AND SALT-MARSH DEPOSITS**—Peat and organic silt and silt, brown to dark gray; minor sand and shells. Locally, a base, may include alluvial sand and gravel deposited before marine inundation. As much as 100 feet thick.

**Glacial Deposits**—These include till and stratified drift deposited by ice and meltwater during the late Wisconsinan glaciation. The till is a reddish-brown, nonstratified, poorly-sorted sediment consisting of pebbles, cobbles, and a few boulders scattered in a matrix of mixed silt, sand, and clay. It is deposited by glacial ice. Stratified drift includes reddish-brown to gray, moderately to well-sorted, cross- to plane-bedded sand and gravel deposited in deltas and fans in glacial lakes and in glacial river plains and reddish-brown to gray, well-sorted, laminated silt, clay, and fine sand deposited on the bottom of glacial lakes. The sand fraction in both till and stratified drift is predominantly quartz and red and gray shale fragments. The composition of pebbles in these deposits is provided in table 2.

Lake Wisconsinan ice advanced southerly to southwesterly across the map area to the southern edge of the terminal moraine. As the glacier advanced, it overrode sand and gravel laid down in lakes and river plains in valleys in front of the ice margin. Records of wells and borings indicate that these deposits are preserved beneath till in a few places, chiefly where valleys drained toward the advancing glacier. These include the preglacial valley in the northeastern part of the map area (units Qp1 and Qs1 in wells 4-7, 80, 82, 83, 85), the preglacial valley extending from Metuchen to the Rahway area (units Qp1 and Qs1 in section C-C', wells 42, 93, 203, 208-210, 221, 331) and in the lowland between the Arthur Kill and Woodbridge Creek (wells 179-182, 237-239, 241, 242, 244-246, 249, 256, 305, 309, 313). Ice also overrode fluvial sand and gravel at Perth Amboy (unit Qp1, section B-B', wells 134-137, 151, 158, 159, 343).

Ice also overrode, eroded, and deformed unconsolidated Cretaceous deposits and Pensauken Formation sand and silt at Carteret, Woodbridge, and Metuchen (K and Tp on sections A-A', B-B', F-F'). Folds of Cretaceous sand and clay, and in places, Pensauken sand gravel, were formerly exposed at Woodbridge, Perth Amboy, Middlesex County, New Jersey (Ries and others, 1964) and were also observed in several excavations between 1987 and 1995. The two hills mapped as ice-contact deposits (Qc1) in Woodbridge and Carteret may contain, or consist largely of, deformed Cretaceous sediment.

North of the Cretaceous outcrop behind the ice advanced across red shale bedrock. Glacial erosion of bedrock in the preglacial valleys was minimal because the valleys were sediment-filled. On low lands between the valleys, though, ice eroded rock and deposited till to form low, smoothed ridges with a rough, northeast-southwest trend parallel to both ice flow and rock strike.

The terminal moraine (Qm) was deposited while the ice margin stood at and melted back from its maximum position. The moraine is a broad belt of knolls, ridges, and basins, composed mostly of till, extending in an arc from Perth Amboy to Scotch Plains. A prominent frontal ridge as much as 100 feet high marks the south edge of the moraine between Metuchen and Forde, but elsewhere is generally less than 50 feet relief. The back edge of the moraine is a gradual transition from constricting moraine landforms to nonconstricting till. As the sheet of the moraine, meltwater deposited sand and gravel in three glacial river plains (Qp1, Qm, Qs1).

Lake Ashbrook occupied the Robbinston Branch valley. It was controlled first by a spillway at an elevation of about 90 feet across the terminal moraine at Oak Tree. About half-a-mile west of Oak Tree School, just west of the map boundary (spillway AB1 on fig. 1). Most of the Lake Ashbrook deposits in the map area (Qab, Qab1) were probably deposited in this higher lake stage. As the ice margin retreated a lower spillway at an elevation of about 80 feet was uncovered on the divide between the Robbinston Branch and South Branch of the Rahway valleys, just north of Shore View (spillway A21 on fig. 1). Lake Ashbrook lowered to the level of Lake Woodbridge when the retreating ice front uncovered the Robbinston Branch valley in the vicinity of the present Middlesex Reservoir.

Lake Woodbridge occupied the South Branch valley and, later, the Robbinston Branch valley and main Rahway valley upstream from Rahway. It was controlled by a spillway at an elevation of about 60 feet on the Rahway Woodbridge Creek divide near Colonia (WB on fig. 1), and drained when the ice front retreated north of the low land between the South Branch and Woodbridge Creek valleys between Avenue and Rahway. Deposits in this lake in the map area include delicate sediment near Inlet (Qwb).

Lake Bayonne occupied the lowland along the Arthur Kill, Woodbridge Creek, and lower Rahway River. It was controlled at first by a spillway across the terminal moraine at Richmond Valley on Staten Island at an elevation of 25-30 feet. This spillway was succeeded by one across the terminal moraine between Perth Amboy and Staten Island (BN on fig. 1), which gradually lowered as the overflow eroded the moraine. Deposits in Lake Bayonne in the map area are primarily lake-bottom silt and clay (Qb1) and silt, clay, and gravel (Qb1). With continued erosion of the moraine, the spillway migrated northward along the present Arthur Kill and stabilized when it uncovered diatase bedrock near Tremley Point at an elevation of 30 feet. This formed the spillway for Lake Hackensack (HK on fig. 1). Only the subsurface tip of Lake Hackensack extended into the map area, as shallow water along the Arthur Kill north of Tremley Point. Because the ice margin at this time was about 15 miles northeast of Tremley Point, there was little or no glacial sediment deposited in this lake in the map area.

**Qw** WEATHERED SHALE—Poorly-sorted, nonstratified to weakly stratified, reddish-brown to yellowish-red silty clay to clayey silt with some to many angular to subangular clasts of red (minor gray) shale. Derived from mechanical and chemical decomposition of shale of the Passaic Formation of Triassic and Jurassic age. Where Pensauken Formation overlies or is embayed from weathered shale, material may include some white to yellow quartz pebbles and yellow sand derived from cryoturbation or bioturbation of the overlying or colluvial Pensauken sediment. Generally less than 10 feet thick.

**Qk** CRETACEOUS DEPOSITS—Gray, white, yellow, pink, red clay and fine-to-coarse quartz sand, minor quartz gravel. May contain mica, lignite, and ironstone. Massive to laminated; clays may be jointed. Sand may include white laminitic clay from decomposition of foliages. Exposed in former clay and sand pits, where it is generally overlain by fill or degraded natural material.

**MAP SYMBOLS**

**Contact**—Solid where well-defined by landforms, long-dashed where approximate, short-dashed where gradational or fingered, dotted where excavated or projected under fill.

**Limit of excavation**—Ticks point into excavation. Dashed where obscured by grading or filling. Marks extent of former clay, sand, and gravel pits. These areas have a discontinuous layer of artificial fill and displaced and degraded surficial and bedrock materials as much as 20 feet thick. Contacts within these areas show the approximate extent of natural material beneath this man-made layer. Fill is mapped separately only where it has a distinct landform. Extent of pits based, in part, on Ries and others (1964). In places, the base map topography within the excavation has been significantly altered since the date of topographic survey (1934). Contacts within excavated areas show the location of materials at the time of mapping rather than with respect to the base topography.

**Unit to left of slash overlies unit to right**—Shows extent of natural material beneath large areas of fill. Extent of natural materials is based, in part, on Ries and others (1964) and Darton and others (1908).

**Unit formerly present**—Unit in parentheses removed by excavation. Shows location of Maurer delta deposited in Lake Bayonne, based on Darton and others (1908).

**Well or boring with log in table 1**—Location accurate to within 100 feet. Elevation of bedrock surface in italics.

**Well or boring with log in table 1**—Location accurate to within 500 feet. Elevation of bedrock surface in italics.

**Elevation of bedrock surface in well or boring**—Data from Nemicks (1974).

**Elevation of bedrock surface in well or boring**—Data from N. J. Geological Survey files.

**Site of pebble count**—Data in table 2.

**Bedrock outcrop**—Some outcrop locations from R. A. Volkert and D. H. Moorehead, N. J. Geological Survey (personal communication, 1996).

**Former bedrock outcrop**—No longer exposed. From field maps of H. B. Kummel, N. J. Geological Survey (undated).

**Elevation of bedrock surface**—Contour interval 50 feet. Includes surface of Cretaceous deposits.

**Spillway for glacial lake**—Symbol in spillway area, arrow shows direction of drainage. Lettering indicates associated line of section.

**Well or boring**—On section, projected to line of section.

**Depth to bedrock in well or boring**—On section, projected to line of section.

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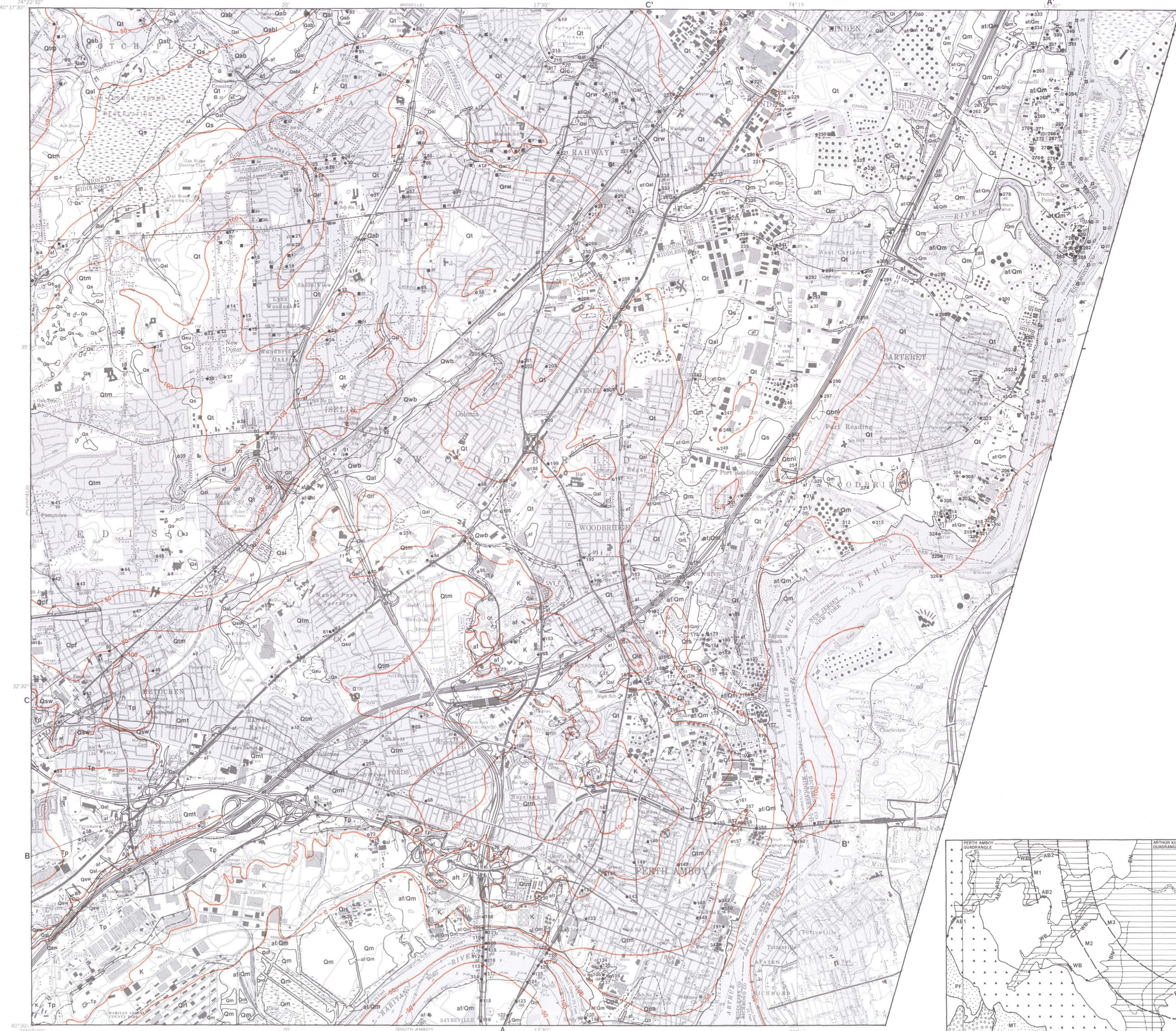
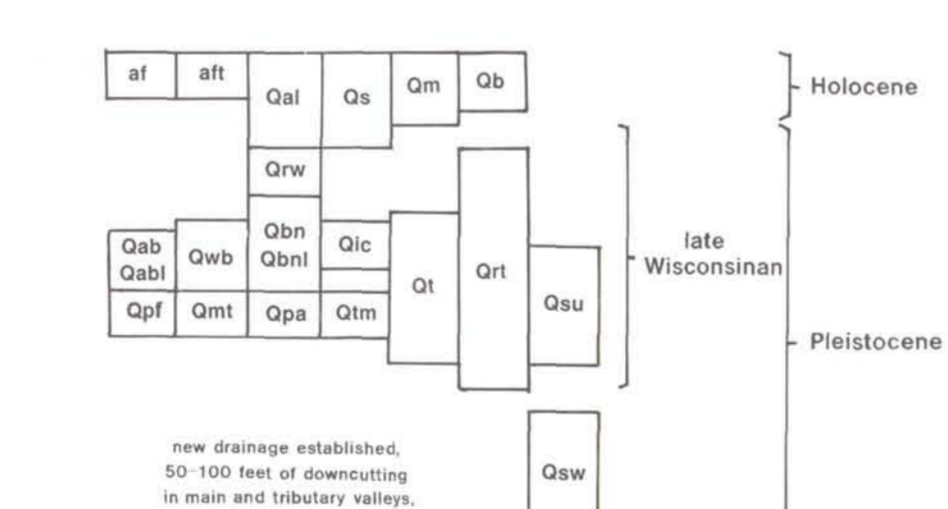
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**Preglacial Deposits**—These include sand and gravel deposited by a preglacial river (Tp), weathered shale bedrock (Qw), and outcropping sand and clay of Cretaceous age (K). The preglacial river, which may have included drainage from the Hudson valley and southern New England, flowed across the region from northeast to southwest between about 5 and 2 million years ago and deposited a broad plain of sand and gravel that covered the entire map area. This river was diverted, possibly by glacial blockage, about 2 million years ago. Local drainage then eroded valleys into and through the former river plain, leaving remnants of the deposit on uplands. These remnants, except for a small area in the southwest corner of the map area, beyond the glacial limit, were then overlain by the late Wisconsinan glacier.

**PENSAUKEN FORMATION**—Sand, pebbly sand, and minor pebble-to-cobble gravel; reddish-yellow to yellow. Sand is predominantly quartz; with some feldspar; and minor red shale, mica, and glauconite. Some of the feldspar in the sand is weathered to clay. Gravel is predominantly white to light gray (stained reddish-yellow to yellow) quartz and quartzite with some chert, red to gray mudstone and sandstone; and minor ironstone (from Coastal Plain formations), gneiss, schist, and diabase. All the clasts except quartz, quartzite, chert, and ironstone generally have thick weathering rinds or are fully decomposed. Cobble gravel contact deposits are restricted to the basal few feet of the deposit and contain abundant clasts of quartzite, sandstone, and mudstone, and scattered clasts of gneiss, schist, and diabase. Tabular, planar cross-bedded sand with minor pebble gravel dominates the deposit above the basal gravel. The pebble gravel is chiefly quartz and quartzite with some chert and minor mudstone.

Salisbury and Knapp (1917) defined and mapped the Pensauken Formation. Owens and Minard (1979) reassigned the Pensauken deposits north of Trenton to the Bridgton Formation (a higher fluvial sand and gravel in southern New Jersey), based on projection of the elevations of the deposits from their type area in southern New Jersey. This usage was followed by Martino (1981) and Stanford (1993, 1995). However, the deposits north of Trenton are continuous in both extent and elevation with those at the Pensauken type locality, so the original nomenclature is used here. The age of the Pensauken is not firmly established. Berry and Hawkins (1935) describe plant fossils from the New Brunswick area that they consider to be of early Pleistocene age. Owens and Minard (1979) assign a late Miocene age based on correlation to units in the Delmarva Peninsula. Pollen from the Pensauken near Plainboro, New Jersey (about 18 miles southwest of Metuchen), include a few pre-Pleistocene species, suggesting a Pliocene age (G. Brenner, written communication, 1993). This age is also consistent with the geomorphic and stratigraphic relationships of the Pensauken to late Pliocene or early Pleistocene till and middle to late Miocene marine and fluvial deposits (Stanford, 1993).

CORRELATION OF MAP UNITS



The interpretations presented here are provisional pending peer review. There may be revisions prior to publication.

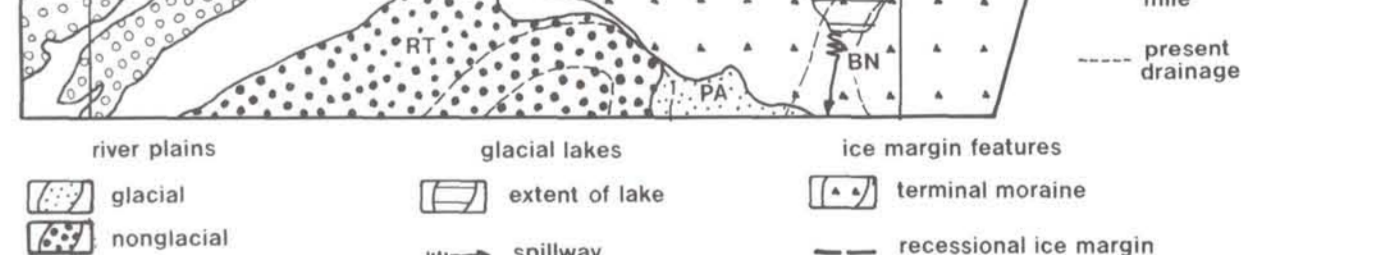


Figure 1—Glacial lakes, river plains, terminal moraine, and recessional ice margins in the map area. Glacial lakes are identified by the following abbreviations on their shorelines and next to their spillways:  
BN—Bayonne  
WB—Woodbridge  
HK—Hackensack  
AB1—high stage of Ashbrook  
AB2—low stage of Ashbrook  
River-plain abbreviations are:  
FP—Plainfield  
MT—Metuchen  
PA—Perth Amboy  
RT—Raritan  
Recessional ice margins are:  
M1—last ice margin before lowering of Lake Ashbrook to lower stage  
M2—last ice margin before Lake Ashbrook lowers to Lake Woodbridge  
M3—last ice margin before Lake Woodbridge drains eastward into Lake Bayonne.

SURFICIAL GEOLOGY OF THE PERTH AMBOY AND ARTHUR KILL QUADRANGLES,  
MIDDLESEX AND UNION COUNTIES, NEW JERSEY

by  
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1999

