

**Charles R. Van Hise  
(1857-1918)**

As the *Outcrop* goes to press, we celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the presidency of the university of our distinguished alumnus, Charles R. Van Hise. Thus began the longest term held by any UW president (1903-1918), a term that would have

been even longer had not a freak infection taken his life unexpectedly at the age of 61. Van Hise was a native son and recipient of three Wisconsin degrees, which included one of the two first MS (1882) and the very first PhD (1892) degrees. He was appointed Assistant Professor in 1882. When in 1888 his mentor, Professor Roland Irving, died suddenly, Van Hise at the age of 31 overnight became chairman of the department of mineralogy and geology and chief of the Lake Superior Division of the United States Geological Survey, which was based in Science Hall beginning in 1882. From then until 1903, besides teaching and running the department, he directed a small army of government geologists in the ambitious investigation of all of the iron ranges of the Lake Superior region. The federal program eventually produced 14 large monographs of the geology of that region, several of which became classics in the geologic literature. As a result of those investigations, Van Hise developed fundamental new concepts of Precambrian geology, especially in the specialties of structural and metamorphic geology. The impact of the roles of Van Hise and his protegee, Charles K. Leith, in those investigations soon

# A Van Hise Centennial

Robert H. Dott

earned an internationally-famous reputation for a Wisconsin School of Precambrian Geology. In recognition of his brilliance, Van Hise was elected to the prestigious National Academy of Sciences in 1902.

Many who know nothing of Van Hise the giant of geology are familiar with Van Hise the distinguished president of the university. His presidency was arguably the most important period in the growth of the institution from a small midwestern college to an internationally recognized educational and research institution. For example starting around 1910, students from Canada, England, China, and Japan began coming to Van Hise's own department for graduate studies. Under his guidance, the university grew rapidly, doubling the acreage of the campus and the number of its buildings, doubling the enrollment, and quadrupling both its budget and the size of the faculty. He also established student government, student loans, and added more student dormitories. A new concept of linking research with instruction was formalized with creation of the graduate school in 1904. Van Hise's own career was a model for this new educational innovation. In 1907 the

medical school was founded and the Extension Division was reorganized to bring the resources of the University to the grass roots of the state, leading to the Wisconsin Idea slogan that "The boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state." Ground breaking research discoveries in agriculture were particularly important in demonstrating the wisdom of this extension effort.

Besides leading so effectively the most important period in the university's evolution, Van Hise was also a leader on the national educational and research scenes. He lectured and published extensively on higher education and scholarship. He was a member of an elite commission, which



*Van Hise Rock in 1973, from the back (east), with Robert H. Dott.*

conceived in 1904 the Carnegie Institution of Washington, a national research engine created with a grant from Andrew Carnegie. Van Hise served as president of the Geological Society of America in 1907, the International Geological Congress in 1910, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1916. He also was offered the directorship of the U.S. Geological Survey, the secretaryship of the Smithsonian Institution, and the presidency of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In addition he was a pioneer in conservation of natural resources, having in 1910 published the first comprehensive book on the subject. At the time of his death, he was writing *Conservation and Regulation in the United States during the War* and *Mineral Resources and the History of Civilization*. Although these were never published, his protege and successor as chairman of the Department of Geology (1905 – 1945), C.K. Leith, picked up these themes and published important books on mineral resources and conservation in the 1920s and 1930s.

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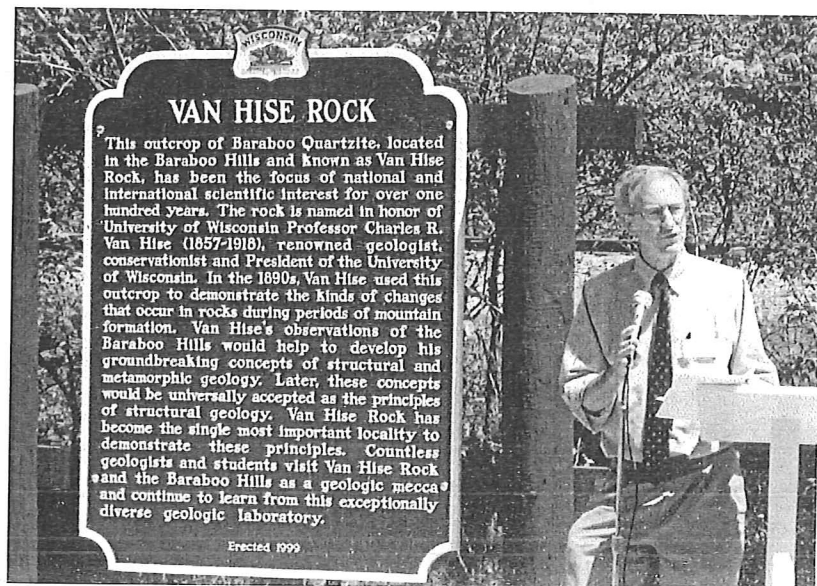
## VAN HISE ROCK

The material of this rock was once sand on the sea bottom, and has since hardened into quartzite. It was tilted to the present position by a slow earth movement, and then separated from the adjacent cliff by erosion. The vertical light and dark bands represent the original layers. The inclined cracks in the dark layer were caused by the readjustment in the layers during the tilting.

This rock is pictured in geologic books as a type illustrating important principles of structural geology, and has been a point of special interest to many investigators in geology visiting this region. President Charles R. Van Hise of the University of Wisconsin was one of the first and foremost of these.

Please do not deface.  
Tablet presented by friends of Van Hise  
at the University of Wisconsin.  
1923

*A plaque with this inscription, mounted on Van Hise Rock by "friends of Van Hise," in 1923, explains its geological origin and its name.*



*Van Hise Rock was designated a National Historic Landmark, and this sign erected, in May 1999. John Valley, then department chair, spoke at the dedication ceremony. (photo by Dave Mielson)*