

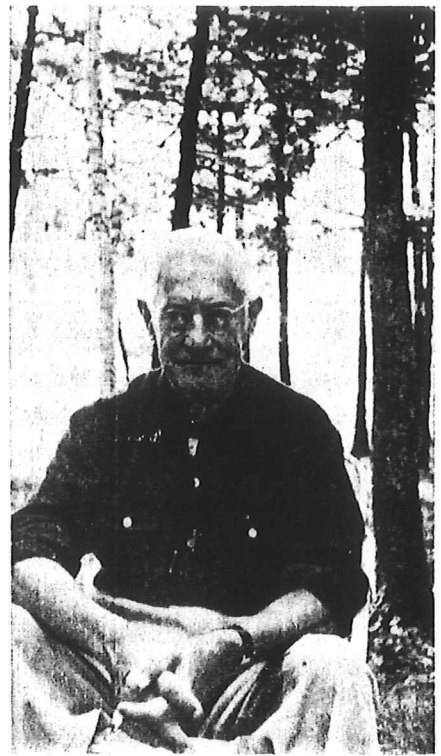
wisconsin's proposed

ICE AGE national park

By Raymond T. Zillmer '10

Our neighbor to N.

an attorney-conservationist gains support for this ambitious project to preserve state's glacial moraines



Attorney Zillmer in a favorite habitat of his

THE MOST important chapter in the geographical and geological history of the United States and of Wisconsin is the glacial epoch, a period during which the northern part of our country was covered for much of the last million years by glaciers of four periods. During the last glacial invasion, the face of Wisconsin was carved and etched as we see it today.

Before the glaciers came, the temperature was so tropical that saber-tooth tigers and mastodons lived here. Then an immense ice cap formed in Canada and spread southward, covering most of the northern part of the United States. One of the glaciers extended as far south as the Missouri and Ohio Rivers, greatly accounting for their location. The form and location of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence, and the topography of the northern part of the United States are due largely to these invasions.

The first glacier destroyed all vegetation in its path and forced out most of the animals, and some species afterwards were extinct. After remaining in Wisconsin perhaps for a hundred thousand years, it retreated. Following its

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retreat, plants and animals returned and again occupied the area for a long time. Then another glacier came down from the north, destroying everything in its path, grinding down mountains, and carrying the rock southward as it pulverized its way. Thereafter a second interglacial interval followed. Four times glaciers overwhelmed the land and retreated, leaving desolation and destruction in their wake.

The last glacial period, which occurred in Wisconsin as recently as 10,000 years ago, is called "The Wisconsin Glacial Period". Nowhere else in the United States did the glacier leave greater evidence of its existence than in Wisconsin, and nowhere can the work of the glacier, especially its moraines, be seen or studied to better advantage. Professor T. C. Chamberlain, renowned geologist and President of our University, was the leader in these early studies. In fact he gave the name "Wisconsin" to the last glacial period. Two of the finest studies of the work of the glaciers were made in Wisconsin, one by W. C. Alden under the guidance of T. C. Chamberlain on the geology of southeastern Wisconsin, and the other by F. T. Thwaites, recently retired from our geology department, on the geology of northeastern Wisconsin. With the exception of a relatively small unglaciated portion, the entire surface of Wisconsin, the location of its rivers and lakes, its farmlands and marshes and its surface deposits of gravel, sand, and till, is the work of glaciers, and principally the glaciers in the Wisconsin Glacial Period.

When the Daly glacier of the Wisconsin Glacial Period came from Canada, it advanced in huge tongues of ice. One of these tongues, the Lake Michigan Lobe, flowed down what is now Lake Michigan. Another moved southwesterly to create the basin for Superior, the deepest lake in the United States, its bottom far below sea level. Still another, the Green Bay tongue, going south to southwest formed Green Bay, Lake Winnebago, and the Horicon Marsh, reaching south to a line extending from Eagle to near Janesville. Its westerly side flowed west of Madison and against the Baraboo Hills, so that it occupied roughly the eastern half of the state. Between the Superior and Green Bay lobes were three smaller lobes. One, the Langlade Lobe, fused

on its easterly side with the Green Bay Lobe northeast of Antigo, and on its westerly side fused with the Wisconsin Valley Lobe from which the Wisconsin River flowed. Next to the west was the Chippewa Lobe from which the Chippewa and Black Rivers flowed. The Michigan Lobe had a small branch, the Delevan Lobe, which spread from the Racine area to east of Janesville.

West of the Green Bay Lobe and south of the Langlade, Wisconsin Valley, Chippewa and Superior Lobes there is a rare glacial phenomenon—an island never touched by any glacier, an area equally interesting by contrast because of the absence of glacial evidence on the

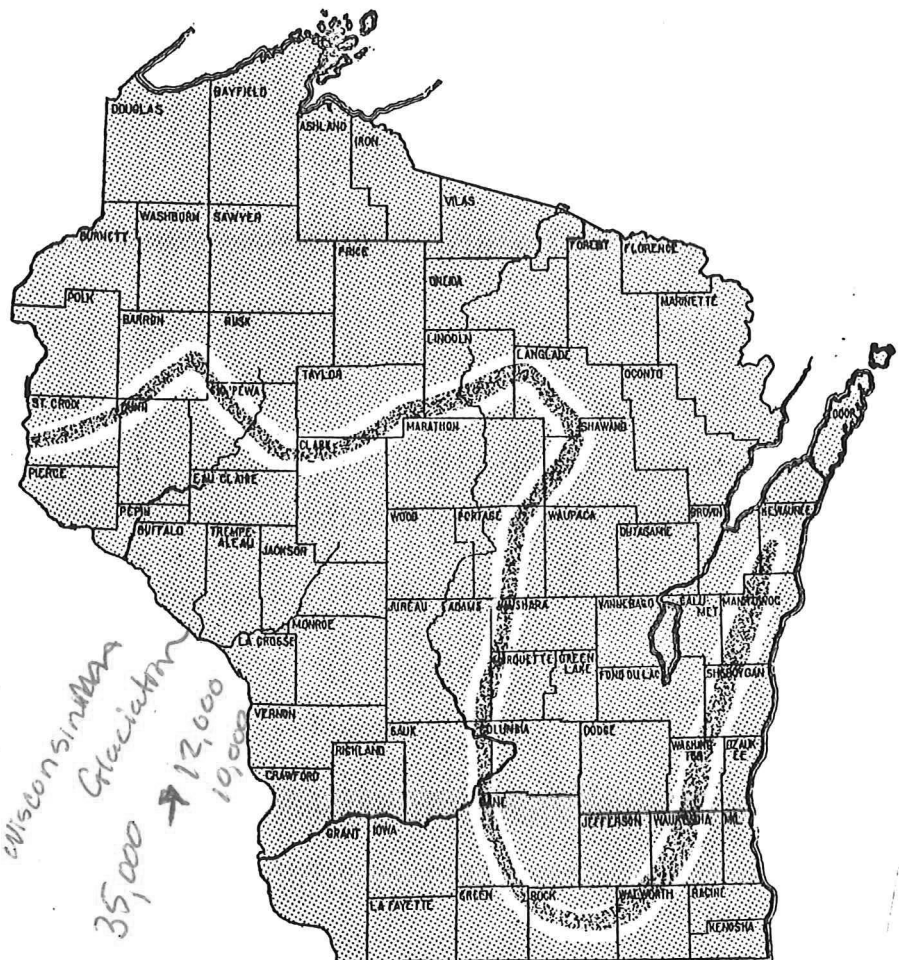
surface. This is called the "driftless area" and it has no lakes. In fact, the thousands of beautiful lakes in Wisconsin would not be in existence today were it not for the terminal moraines and the moraines behind them, for they impound the water of the lakes in northern and eastern Wisconsin.

The glacier tongues left certain natural features, moraines, which can be devoted to public recreation without damage to agriculture or industry. In fact, the protection of these bold features, clothed now for the most part with trees, can only assist in promoting the best possible use of land because of three factors: the recreational value; the protection of soil; and the safeguarding of Wisconsin's water supply.

When the tongues of ice ground over Wisconsin they carried huge quantities of stone, gravel, and sand and deposited these when the ice evaporated and melted. At the sides and ends of the tongues "moraines" were deposited—

The map below indicates the general course which the proposed Ice Age National Park would take. The strip is wider on the map than it would be in reality; if the park were a half mile wide it would appear on the map as only a line.

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cut, thereby generating some nationwide publicity!

Dr. Klotsche also likes to talk about education in general, and the expansion of higher education in the lakeshore area around Milwaukee in particular. He can cite statistic after statistic to prove that higher education institutions in the area, public and private, will be hard pressed to meet the demands of the future.

And just how extensive are these demands in his opinion? He partly an-

swered this philosophic question a few years ago in a speech which contained these lines:

"We must seek out and provide opportunities for the gifted, for on the gifted we must depend. We must depend on them for constantly extending the frontiers of knowledge into new and unexplored regions. But we must also provide understanding on the part of *all* people so that knowledge which has been discovered by the few will eventually affect the lives of all."

proposed ice age national park

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hills of stones and gravel, whereas the sand and light soils washed out at the edges into flatter areas called "outwash" areas. Where great masses of ice were buried in the glacial debris, their melting left deep depressions in the gravel hills—the "kettles", or lakes. When the rocks were exposed they were attacked by lichens and the acids produced by them, by freezing and thawing, and by the elements until they were broken. Ultimately a thin layer of soil was created and it wasn't too long before shrubs and trees covered these rocky hills and the birds and animals returned until we have the Wisconsin of today, an area noted for its rare beauty throughout the country.

The pioneer farmers of Wisconsin cleared some of these hills of trees and worked hard to remove many of the stones, but the effort to farm was unsuccessful and many farms were abandoned. A survey by the state of Wisconsin in 1936, in which the U. S. Park Service assisted, established through soil tests and topographical studies that these moraines were not suitable for agriculture, but were suitable for trees. This report, signed by the Governor, the Director of Conservation and the heads of all the departments of the State Government recommended that the interlobate moraine area, which extends from near Chilton to Eagle and then to near Janesville, in all a distance of about 120 miles, be acquired as a forest recreational area. Only part of this area is in the present State Kettle Moraine Park.

The remnants of the Ice Age in Wisconsin fulfill all the requirements which the U. S. Park Service sets for a national park. They have several great advantages over many existing national parks. They are near the center of population of the United States. They would be used by millions, more people than can use the present remote national parks. Even today, the State Kettle Moraine Park—and the Devils Lake Park—less than ten per cent of the envisioned national park, are each visited by more than one million persons a year.

The State Kettle Moraine Park, which consists entirely of interlobate moraines, would be the nucleus around which the National Park could be formed. From Chilton to Kewaskum this park is quite well established, but from Kewaskum to north of Eagle the State Conservation Department has made no purchases, although this area contains some of the finest moraines, including Holy Hill and Lapham Peak. From north of Eagle to south of Whitewater the state has purchased a considerable nucleus of land. Here the State Park ends.

The National Park from this point would follow the terminal moraines of four glacial tongues. These moraines extend southwest to near Janesville, and then northwest to west of Madison and the Baraboo Hills, which have many interesting glacial formations in and near them. North of the Baraboo Hills was formerly the largest lake in Wisconsin, Glacial Lake Wisconsin. The

park would then extend northward east of the Wisconsin River, and in Langlade County would go westward and follow the terminal moraines at the ends of the Langlade, Chippewa and Superior tongues to the St. Croix River.

The cost of the project is not great. Much of the land involved is owned by the Federal Government in the Chequamegon Forest and by counties in county forests. The cost of all the other required land, a few million dollars, is insignificant if we compare it with the cost of foreign aid or of most government projects today, particularly our highways and bridges. It would not cost more than five miles of modern divided highways. Each year Wisconsin spends fifty times as much on highways and bridges. A bridge or two omitted or postponed would pay for the whole park.

One of our many private charitable foundations could very easily pay for the entire cost of all the land involved, and smaller local foundations could finance specific local portions in which they are interested.

Some may say that the state should develop this project. It could very well do this. But the state is confronted with many requests to finance various projects in conservation, and there are many influences pulling in different directions. As a result, the state would not acquire the land before it would become too expensive. Of the 120 mile strip recommended by the state survey of 1936, only two-thirds has been planned for ultimate purchase. And of this, only 40 per cent has been purchased, so that the Kettle Moraine Park at the past rate of purchase will not be complete until the year 1990. Nor has the Conservation Commission committed itself to purchase the central one-third which was recommended by the state survey of 1936. If this were included, it would take until beyond the year 2020, unless new funds are provided. The Conservation Commission has neglected to apply available funds. Wisconsin, however, has done an excellent job of developing the land to fit the recreational needs of people, but it has done it too slowly, and has completely neglected trails, a matter it now promises to expedite.

A parkway drive with waysides should follow natural contours through the entire park. A trail for hikers and

skiers should be opened throughout the park, spotted with simple shelters for overnight camps. The Appalachian Trail follows the mountains of the east for over 2,000 miles, the John Muir Trail the Sierras for hundreds of miles, and the Canadian government has built thousands of miles of trails in its national parks. In Wisconsin the parkway and the trail would follow the moraines for about 500 miles.

Congressman Henry Reuss has recognized the potentialities of the Wisconsin moraines and introduced a bill to establish a Moraine National Park. The name "Ice Age National Park" is used in his latest bill. Mr. Conrad L. Wirth, Director of the U. S. Park Service, on examining the proposal wrote to Mr. Reuss on last June 25:

"Mr. Zillmer's proposal is an admirable, broad and imaginative approach to the conservation of natural and recreational resources. We believe, as you do, that the proposal warrants careful and serious consideration to determine the national significance, suitability, possible extent and feasibility of the area for National Park purposes."

In September the experts of the U. S. Park Service examined the glacial deposits in Wisconsin for five days to determine their suitability for a National Park. I believe that they were convinced that the formations in Wisconsin qualify for an Ice Age National Park. They were impressed by what the state has done to develop a long narrow park to serve the people. It was, of course, impossible in the time available to the park group to cover the entire interlobate and terminal moraines located in the proposed 500 mile park. However, they did see many representative areas. The Park Service Team reported to the Advisory Board on National Parks in October, which directed a further more thorough reconnaissance, which will soon take place.

This land must be purchased soon, before the population explosion following the opening of the St. Lawrence waterways strikes Wisconsin, before the hills are pre-empted by private homes, and the land becomes too expensive. It will cost us little now. It will pay our children and theirs much hereafter.

We spend a lot to go faster. Let us spend a little to go slower.

necrology

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