Preface....13
What the Book Describes....13
Denver's Geological Context....16
Organization of the Book....17
What the Book Does Not Describe....19
Names of Rock Units Used in This Book....20
Chapter 1 — Peaks, Hogbacks, and the Basin — Denver's Backdrop....22
The Front Range....24
The Colorado Piedmont and the High Plains....26
The Denver Basin....27
Lava Flows and Giant Floods....29
Glacial Cirques, River Terraces, Mesas, Landslides, and Stream Cuts — Recent Geology Around Denver....30
Chapter 2 — Mountain Building and Piles of Sediment — A Ten-Minute Geology Course....32
A Science of Change....32
Geologic Time....32
The Geologic Time Scale....34
Plate Tectonic Processes....36
Rock Cycles....38
Rock Types....40
Composition of Rocks, Minerals, and Crystallization....42
Basic Principles....44
Faults and Unconformities....46
The Stratigraphic Column around Denver....47
A Note on Named Stratigraphic Units....49
Depositional Patterns....51
Climatic, Geographic, and Sea-Level Changes....53
Mountain Ranges and Basins....53
Other Earth Movements....54
Landslides, Earthflows, and Slumps....54

Geomorphology and Recent Evolution of the Landscape 55
Channels, Distributary Fans, and Deltas 55
River and Stream Evolution 56
Formation of Terraces and Pediments 56
Stream Capture 56
Chapter 3 — High Peaks, Colorado Piedmont, and the Denver Basin — A Short Geological History of the Area 58
Precambrian Denver 59
The Great Unconformity 61
The Pennsylvanian 62
The Permian 63
The Triassic 64
The Jurassic 64
The Cretaceous 65
The Rise of the Modern Rocky Mountains 66
The Tertiary and Quaternary Periods 67
Variations along the Front Range and Mountain Front West of Denver 68
Denver's Red Rocks 69
Chapter 4 — Backbone of the Continent — the Precambrian Core 71
The Basic Precambrian History 72
Life in the Precambrian 72
Characteristics of the Core Rocks of the Front Range 73
What You Can See on the Field Trips 75
Archean Wyoming and the North American Craton 75
Chronology 77
Precambrian Tectonic History 79
Colorado Is Pieced Together — 1.80-1.70 Ga 79
Shearing and Injection of Granite Plutons — 1.44-1.36 Ga 80
How Do Geologists Know About These Rocks? 82
In the Lab 84
In the Field 85
Precambrian Rocks West of Denver 86
1.7 Billion-Year and Older Rocks 86

1.4 Billion-Year-Old Rocks 91
Chapter 5 — The Great Unconformity 96
The North American Framework for Late Proterozoic and Paleozoic Geology of the Area 97
What Geologists Know About Colorado During This Time 98
Middle to Late Proterozoic 98
Early Paleozoic 99
Cambrian Period 100
Ordovician 101
Silurian 101
Devonian 101
Mississippian 101
Boulder from the Later Proterozoic to the Pennsylvanian 102
Chapter 6 — Ancestral Rockies and Flatirons — Denver During the Pennsylvanian 103
Characteristics of the Fountain Formation 104
Variations in the Fountain along the Mountain Front 107
North America in the Pennsylvanian (318-299 Ma) 107
Colorado in the Pennsylvanian 108
The Ancestral Rockies 109
Axes of the Ancestral and Modern Front Ranges 111
The Pennsylvanian Context 112
The Pennsylvanian Big Picture 113
Final Notes on Denver in Pennsylvanian Time 114
Flatirons, Spires, and Outcrops along the Mountain Front 115
Chapter 7 — Dune Sands and Fetid Flats — Denver in the Permian and Triassic 116
The Permian Period 116
The Permian in Denver 117
The Fountain and Ingleside Formations 120
The Lyons Formation 120
The Lykins Formation 123
The Triassic in Denver 123
Chapter 8 — Jurassic Park 125

The Jurassic Context 125
The Ralston Creek Formation 126
The Morrison Formation 126
Chapter 9 — Cretaceous — Undersea Denver 128
An Overview of the Cretaceous in the Western Interior of North America 129
The Western Interior Seaway 130
Depositional Environments in the Late Cretaceous 132
Transgressive and Regressive Sequences 133
Mountain Building Events 133
The Cretaceous in the Denver Basin 134
The Dakota Hogback — Denver Becomes Beachfront Property 137
The Dakota Group West of Denver 140
The Lower Dakota Group — Lytle Formation and Plainview Sandstone 142
The Middle Dakota Group — Skull Creek Shale 144
The Upper Dakota Group — Muddy Sandstone and Other Sandstone Bodies 147
Floors of the Denver Sea -- Cretaceous Marine Deposits 147
The Benton Group (Benton Shale, Benton Formation) 148
The Niobrara Formation 149
The Pierre Shale 151
Late Cretaceous Denver Beaches -- Fox Hills and Laramie Formations 155
The Fox Hills Formation 157
The Laramie Formation 160
Late Cretaceous Growth Faults 161
Chapter 10 — The Denver Basin 166
The Importance of Sedimentary Basins 166
Structure of the Denver Basin 167
Stratigraphy of the Denver Basin — Formations, Facies, and Confusion 169
Raynolds' Stratigraphic Approach 171
The Denver Basin Project 171
A View of the Basin 173
A Denver Basin Chronology 173
Description of the Rocks 173

Aquifers of the Denver Basin— and a Brief Discursion on Water Law 173
The Aquifers 173
The History 174
Chapter 11 — The Rise of the Rockies 177
The Rise of the Modern Front Range 177
Plate Tectonics and the Modern Front Range 178
Other Tectonic Models for the Laramide Orogeny 182
Tectonic 'Style' of the Front Range Uplift 182
The Exhumation of the Front Range and Block Faulting to the South 183
The Rocky Mountain Erosion Surface 184
Volcanism and Igneous Intrusions During the Late Cretaceous and Tertiary 187
Chapter 12 — Glaciers and Terraces — Quaternary Denver 188
Glaciation in the Front Range West of Denver 196
Dating Glacial Deposits 197
Pediments 199
River Terraces 199
Canyon Incision Rates and Weathering of Slopes 200
Paleovalleys in the Rocky Mountain Erosion Surface 201
Chapter 13 — Field Trips 203
Urban Geology Field Trips 204
Miscellaneous Notes on the Field Trips 204
Bearings 204
Field Trip A -- Mountain Front from Coal Creek to Chatfield Reservoir 205
Description 205
Location/Directions 205
Geological Maps 205
Transportation 205
Overview of the Geology 205
Road/Trail Log 207
Field Trip B — Golden Gate Canyon, White Ranch Park, and the Idaho Springs-Ralston Shear Zone 229
Description 229
Location/Directions 229

Geological Maps 229
Transportation 229
Overview of the Geology 229
Road/Trail Log 230
Waypoint 243
Field Trip C — Boulder Foothills 245
Acknowledgement 245
Description 245
Location/Directions 245
Geological Maps 245
Transportation 245
Overview of the Geology 245
Road/Trail Log 245
Field Trip D —Matthews/Winters Park and Red Rocks 246
Description 246
Location/Directions 246
Geological Maps 246
Transportation 246
Overview of the Geology 246
Road/Trail Log 246
Field Trip E — Dinosaur Ridge and Rooney Road 252
Description 252
Location/Directions 252
Geological Maps 252
Transportation 253
Overview of the Geology 253
History 253
Road/Trail Log 254
Field Trip F — Green Mountain 271
Description 271
Location/Directions 271
Geological Maps 271
Transportation 271

Overview of the Geology 271
Road/Trail Log 273
Field Trip G — Roxborough Park 279
Description 279
Location/Directions 279
Geological Maps 280
Transportation 280
Overview of the Geology 280
Road/Trail Log 282
Field Trip H — Castlewood Canyon 296
Description 296
Location/Directions 296
Geological Maps 296
Transportation 296
Overview of the Geology 296
Road/Trail Log 296
Field Trip I — Clear Creek Canyon 297
Description 297
Location/Directions 297
Geological Maps 297
Transportation 297
Overview of the Geology 297
Road/Trail Log 297
Field Trip J — West Chicago Creek to Hells Hole 298
Description 298
Location/Directions 298
Geological Maps 298
Transportation 298
Overview of the Geology 298
Road/Trail Log 298
Field Trip K — Golden and Colorado School of Mines 304
Description 304
Location/Directions 304

Geological Maps 304
Transportation 304
Overview of the Geology 304
Road/Trail Log 304
Field Trip L — Boulder Creek Batholith and Green Mountain Kimberlite 306
Acknowledgement 306
Description 306
Location/Directions 306
Geological Maps 307
Transportation 307
Overview of the Geology 307
Road/Trail Log 308
Field Trip M — West Side of the Front Range—Southern Segment 314
Description 314
Location/Directions 314
Geological Maps 315
Transportation 315
Overview of the Geology 315
Road/Trail Log 319
Field Trip N — Daniels Park–Jarre Creek–Wildcat Mountain–Perry Park 335
Description 335
Location/Directions 336
Geological Maps 336
Transportation 336
Overview of the Geology 336
Road/Trail Log 336
Field Trip O — Waterton Canyon 347
Description 347
Location/Directions 347
Geological Maps 347
Transportation 347
Overview of the Geology 348
Road/Trail Log 348

Field Trip P — Garden of the Gods 355
Description 355
Location/Directions 355
Geological Maps 355
Transportation 355
Overview of the Geology 355
Road/Trail Log 355
Field Trip Q — Castle Rock 357
Description 357
Location/Directions 357
Geological Maps 357
Transportation 357
Overview of the Geology 357
Road/Trail Log 357
Field Trip R — I-70 Road Cut 359
Description 359
Location/Directions 359
Geological Maps 359
Transportation 359
Overview of the Geology 359
Road/Trail Log 359
Field Trip U — Mt. Falcon Park 360
Description 360
Location/Directions 360
Geological Maps 361
Transportation 361
Overview of the Geology 361
Road/Trail Log 361
Field Trip V — Bergen Park, Squaw Pass, Echo Lake, and Chicago Lakes 367
Description 367
Location/Directions 367
Geological Maps 367
Transportation 367

Overview of the Geology 367
Road/Trail Log 368
Field Trip W — Shadow Canyon Geomorphology 374
Acknowledgement 374
Description 374
Location/Directions 374
Geological Maps 374
Transportation 374
Overview of the Geology 374
Road/Trail Log 374
Field Trip Y — Manitou Springs 375
Description 375
Location/Directions 375
Geological Maps 375
Transportation 375
Overview of the Geology 375
Road/Trail Log 375
Field Trip Z — West Side of the Front Range—Northern Segment 376
Description 376
Location/Directions 376
Geological Maps 376
Transportation 376
Overview of the Geology 376
Road/Trail Log 377
Appendices 393
A: Further Reading and Resources 393
General Geology Texts and Literature 393
Web Resources 393
B: Basic Geology 394
Geologic Time Periods 394
The Geologic Time Scale 395
Index Fossils 403
Radiometric Dating and Its Relation to Other Dating Methods 404

Paleomagnetic Dating 410
Classification and Evolution of Rocks..... 411
Volcanoes.....419
Folds, Faults, and Unconformities..... 420
Plate Tectonics..... 424
C: Using Topographic Maps..... 439
USGS 7½-Minute Series 440
Learning to Read Topographic Maps.....441
D: Using Geological Maps..... 442
Rock Units 442
Abbreviations for Rock Units..... 442
Stratigraphic Cross-Sections..... 444
Other Symbols and Features..... 444
Reading Geological Maps..... 444
E: Topographic & Geological Maps of the Denver Area..... 446
F: GPS Positions of Field Sites..... 448
A Few GPS Nuances 448
Receiver Settings 449
Table Format 449
Glossary..... 450
Literature Cited.....461
Index 493