

Peak-Finder Interpretive Panel

(Installed at Rabbit Mountain, Walden Ponds, Legion Park, and the Aquarius Trailhead)

You are standing in the transition zone between two great geographic regions in North America: the Front Range of the Southern Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains. The abrupt and dramatic rise from the mile-high prairie to over 14,000 feet at Longs Peak creates the rich diversity of landscapes, life zones, and ecosystems found in Boulder County.

Ancient Landscapes

Three hundred million years ago, the Ancestral Front Range uplifted about 30 miles west of where the current Front Range is today. Millions of years of weathering and erosion wore those ancient peaks away and buried them in sediment and debris thousands of feet thick. Shallow seas periodically advanced and retreated from Colorado, leaving behind even more sedimentary material. Dinosaurs evolved, flourished, and went extinct in this area.

Today's Rockies

Renewed uplift began about 65 million years ago, fracturing and tilting sedimentary rock layers and giving birth to the “modern” Front Range of Colorado. As wind, water, ice, and gravity continued to erode and transport sediment downstream, nearly two-billion-year-old igneous and metamorphic rocks were exposed along the Continental Divide to the west. Within the last two million years, valley glaciers above 8,000 feet put the finishing touches on the Front Range, carving out the high-country scenery that we enjoy today and sending sands, gravels, and rocks to the plains below. Today's landscape is only the most recent chapter in the dynamic and ongoing geologic story of Boulder County.