

The mountains to the west of the Rocky Mountain trench in southern British Columbia are composed of a series of late Precambrian quartzites, slates and magnesian limestones of great thickness. There are wide areas in the vicinity of granitic intrusives in which intensive alteration of these sediments has taken place. The Precambrian rocks extend west as far as Upper Arrow and Shuswap lakes and north from the International Boundary probably half the length of the province. Quartzites, mica schists and crystalline limestones with interbands and broad areas of schists of various kinds, and intrusive granite gneiss are found over a wide stretch of the Yukon plateau and are probably of Precambrian age. Slates, quartzites and conglomerates, also probably of the same age, occur along the northern part of the Alaska-Yukon boundary, in the Ogilvie range and in the Kluane district.

On the interior plateau of British Columbia, limestones, quartzites and argillites of Carboniferous age and known as the Cache Creek group are of wide distribution. These are succeeded upward by argillites and limestones and a great mass of volcanic intrusives and effusives of Triassic age, and these are succeeded by sediments and volcanics of Jurassic age. The Triassic and Jurassic formations are widely distributed, are found on the islands to the west, and some at least extend into Yukon.

Formations of Cretaceous age are found on Vancouver and Queen Charlotte islands and in a belt extending up the Fraser and along the eastern edge of the Coast range into the Skeena valley. They are mainly formations of continental origin and carry coal seams, but also include sediments of marine origin and volcanics.

Very early Tertiary times were characterized by widespread orogenic disturbances in the Cordillera. The Rocky mountains were formed and there was much folding and faulting in places in the interior, followed by intense erosion. Tertiary sediments, partly of continental deposition with seams of lignite and partly of marine deposition, occur at many points throughout the interior of the Cordillera and on Vancouver island. Lava flows capping some of these sediments cover broad stretches of the interior plateau.

In Pleistocene time, nearly the whole of the Cordillera with the exception of a large area in Yukon was subjected to glaciation, and glaciation still persists in the mountainous regions. Volcanics of recent age are found in areas of limited extent.

An episode of great economic importance in the geological history of the West was the intrusion of the granitic rocks of the Coast Range batholith and of acid rocks at different points in the interior, particularly in the southern part of British Columbia, in Mesozoic times. Many of the more important mineral deposits of British Columbia, such as the copper deposits of Hidden Creek, Britannia and Allenby mountain, the gold-silver deposits of Salmon River district and the silver-lead deposits of the Slocan, had their origin in solutions given off by the magmas of these acid intrusives.

The lead-zinc deposit of the Sullivan mine lies in sedimentary rocks of Precambrian age. The Cretaceous and Tertiary formations carry seams of coal and lignite of great importance. There are economic deposits of other minerals in great variety throughout the Cordillera, and British Columbia is one of the leading mineral-producing provinces of Canada. The gold of the once famous Klondike region was found in placers of an unglaciated area and the gold of the Cariboo district occurs mainly in Tertiary placers that were unaffected or little affected by glaciation.