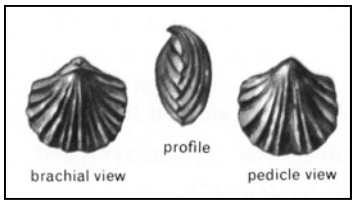
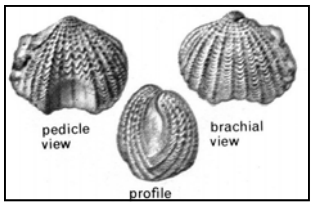
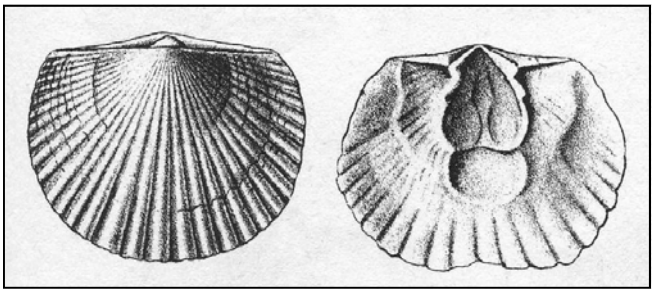
Fossils of Northeast Iowa

Brachiopods

Small marine invertebrates that lived in hinged shells attached to the sea floor. Name means "lamp shells." Bilateral symmetry across shell: to make mirror images, you must cut across shells/valves, not between them. Common in limestone and sandstone.

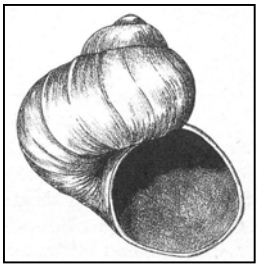


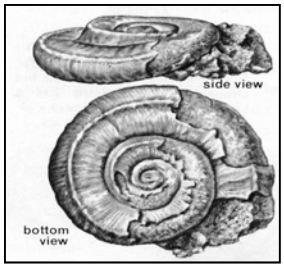


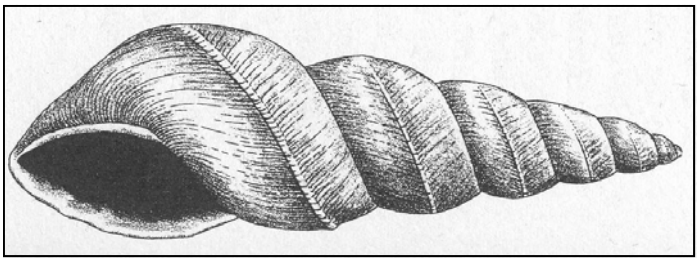


Gastropods

Prehistoric versions of snails that were once confined to life at sea. Name means "stomach foot," since gastropods have a single, muscular foot that can be spread out broadly or pulled into its shell. Shell consists of one main structure.

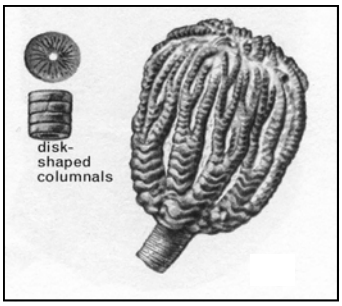




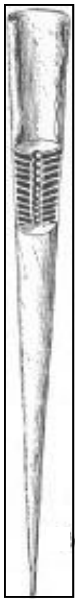


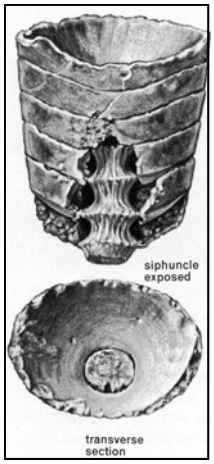
Crinoids

Flower-like marine animals covered with limey plates or spines and attached to jointed stalks. These sea lilies ("crinoids" means "lilylike") grew in colonies on the sea floor. The limestone quarry near Le Grand, Iowa is famous for its crinoids.



Nautiloid Cephalopods

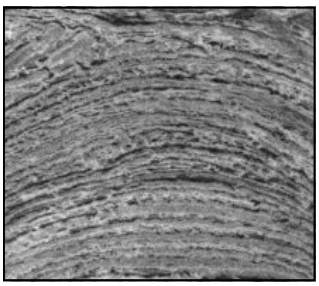




"Cephalopod" means "headfoot," because what look like a cephalopod's arms or tentacles are actually part of its foot, which has merged with the head. Moved by crawling with tentacles, or by filling its shell cavity with water and squirting it out. Prehistoric nautiloid cephalopods grew to 15 feet and had straight or gently curved shells.

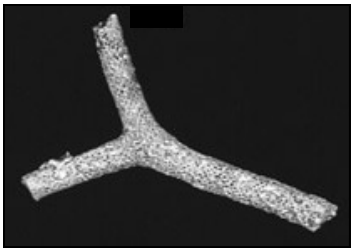
Stromatolites

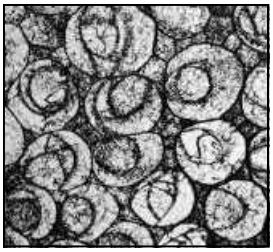
Mats of stony algae/cyanophytes formed in shallow water by the trapping, binding and cementation of sedimentary grains. Name means "layer stones." Modern stromatolites are still forming in certain parts of the world today.

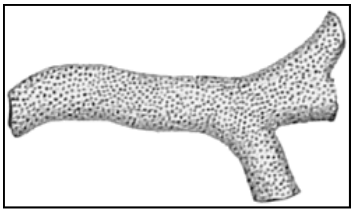


Bryozoans

Tiny colonies of aquatic animals that grew on the sea floor, with several hundred coral-like individuals in each colony. Name means "moss animals." Animal had no head or brain, just nerves.





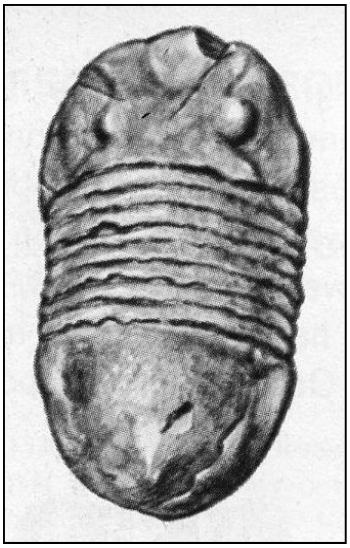


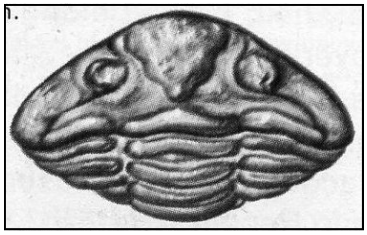
Branching Bryozoans

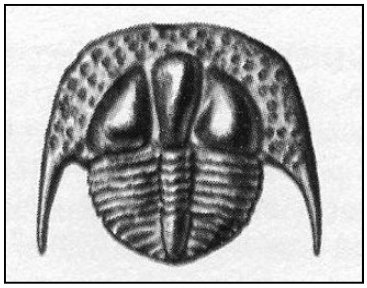
Prasopora, or gumdrop, Bryozoans

Trilobites

Extinct marine anthropods. Name means "three-lobed ones," since trilobite bodies are divided lengthwise into three lobes: a central lobe with one on either side. Were probably bottom-feeding scavengers and predators.

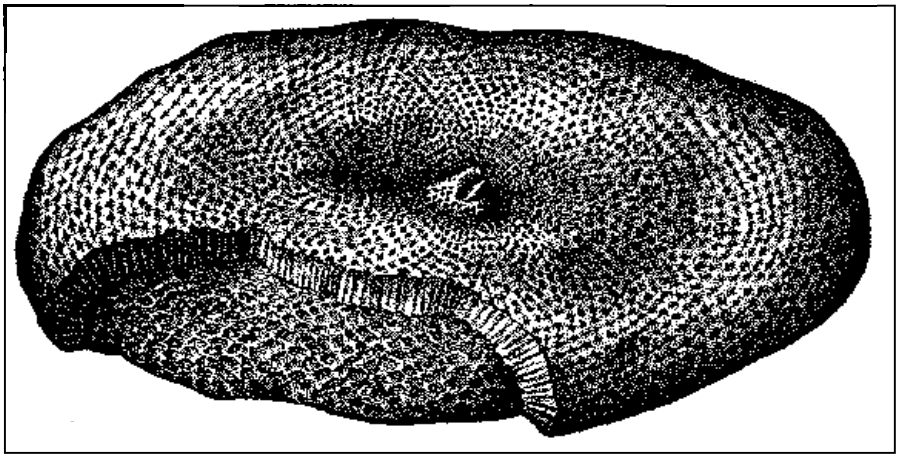


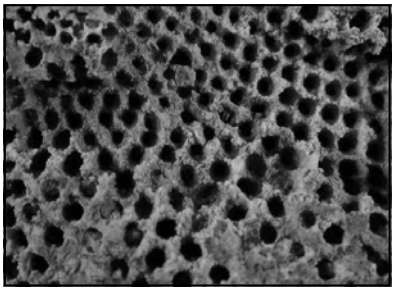


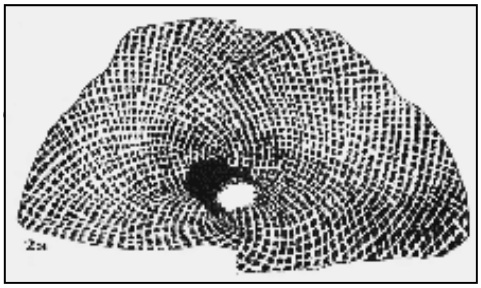


Receptaculites

Commonly called "sunflower" corals, but are actually plate-shaped masses of algae that grew in Galena limestone. Most plentiful in the region that is now the Upper Mississippi Valley.







Horn Corals

Abandoned homes of sea floor animals. Horn-shaped, and surface commonly wrinkled.