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GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF KENTUCKY.

N. S. SHALER, DIRECTOR.

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ON THE GEOLOGY

OF PORTIONS OF THE

UPPER CUMBERLAND RIVER VALLEY,

IN

BELL AND HARLAN COUNTIES.

BY A. R. CRANDALL AND P. N. MOORE.

PART XII. VOL. IV. SECOND SERIES.

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STEREOTYPED FOR THE SURVEY BY MAJOR, JOHNSTON & BARRETT, YEOMAN PRESS, FRANKFORT, KY.

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## ON THE GEOLOGY OF PORTIONS OF THE UPPER CUMBERLAND RIVER VALLEY, IN BELL AND HARLAN COUNTIES.

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During the summer of 1876, some time was spent by the writers in the country drained by the upper Cumberland river, for the purpose of constructing the geological sections accompanying this report, and of which it is chiefly explanatory, inasmuch as no detailed discussion of the geology of this valley can be attempted, until the whole of it shall have been thoroughly examined.

The first and principal section (plate I) is from Cumberland Mountain, at Chadwell's Gap, to Straight creek, crossing Pine Mountain a short distance below the mouth of Browney's creek. The course of this section line is about N. 40° W., and it follows in a general way the direction of Browney's creek, crossing Brush Mountain and various spurs of the Black Mountains.

The measurements upon which it is based are all instrumental. The survey of Browney's creek, by which the horizontal measurement of the central portion of the section was determined, was by Mr. E. Underwood, jr. The vertical sections of horizontal coal-measure strata in the Black Mountains were made with an aneroid barometer.

Time failed for the construction of a complete section across the valley near Mt. Pleasant, but a section of the Cumberland Mountain at Crank's Gap was carefully measured, and is given herewith (plate II), as also a number of sections (plate III) of the coal-measure rocks in the Black Mountains, near Mt. Pleasant, Harlan county.

The section at Crank's Gap is from instrumental measurements by the writers, except the horizontal and vertical

distances from Crank's Gap to the "Poor Valley," on the Virginia side of the mountain, which were determined by Mr. C. Schenk.

The valley of the Cumberland river above Pineville, where the river cuts through and leaves the Pine Mountain, on its way to the Ohio, is one of the long, straight, and narrow Appalachian valleys which are so characteristic of the topography of East Tennessee and Southwestern Virginia. It owes its shape to the same cause—the long parallel mountains which determine the course of the stream. In this case the mountains which bound and determine the valley are the Cumberland and the Pine, the last to the northwest of the Appalachian series of mountains.

The Cumberland river, from the head of its longest and main branch, the Poor Fork, flows close to the foot of the Pine Mountain, never leaving it for any great distance. It therefore receives no branches of any size from the northwest, all of its tributaries flowing into it from the area between the river and the Cumberland Mountain. Its principal tributaries are Clover and Martin's Forks. Yellow, Browney's, and Puckett's creeks also drain a considerable area of the valley. Above the mouth of Clover and Martin's Forks the river is known as the Poor Fork.

From the section (plate I) it will be seen that the Cumberland valley or basin is a synclinal valley, although the mountains which terminate it on either side are of very different ages of elevation. The evidence of this statement will be referred to further on. The Cumberland and Pine Mountains, which constitute the edges of this basin, are formed of up-turned strata, of age from the Carboniferous to the Silurian, those on the Cumberland dipping to the northwest, passing beneath the surface, and reappearing on the Pine Mountain, where they dip to the southeast.

The Black Mountains, which is the term applied to the palmate mountains lying between the Cumberland and the Pine, are formed of horizontal coal-measure strata, the low-

est of which are geologically above the highest of the Cumberland and the Pine Mountains.

Brush Mountain, through which the section (plate I) passes, is analogous in its structure to, and is really at one point a part of, the Cumberland. It was probably formed at the same time and by the same force which elevated the Cumberland Mountain to such a height. It is but a few miles in length, and lies parallel to Cumberland Mountain. It is joined to, and identical with, it at the head of Martin's Fork and Shilaleh creek, which flow in opposite directions, and separate the two mountains by narrow valleys. The section (plate I) crosses Martin's Fork near its head.

The Conglomerate, or rather the members of the Conglomerate series at the base of the coal measures, are the determining rocks, of greatest topographical value, in the three mountains, the Cumberland, Brush, and Pine.

The Cumberland Mountain is the wasted edge of what was once a grand anticlinal arch, reaching nearly to the Holston river. Since its elevation, therefore, Cumberland Mountain has, in consequence of erosive action, retreated a distance of several miles. The evidence of this, and the discussion of the dynamical geology of this region, will be found in the reports of the Director of the Survey; so that the mere statement of the fact is all that is necessary here.

Brush Mountain, as shown by the section (plate I), is formed by the uplift of, and a great fold in, the Conglomerate series, by which these beds have been raised nearly or quite three thousand feet above their original level, and still left in a horizontal position. This singular position must have resulted from a yielding of the strata to a force acting more nearly vertical than seems to have been usual in the faults and folds of this portion of the Appalachians, but still acting from the southeast.

Lying horizontally, the beds resist erosion most readily; and it is owing to this fact that the mountain retains such a height, and that the valley between it and the Cumberland is so narrow and shallow.

On the northwest slope of the mountain these same Conglomerate beds are dipping very steeply, from  $70^{\circ}$  to  $85^{\circ}$ , or almost vertical. This change in dip is due to a fold or bend in the strata, and not to a fault.

The actual bend in the lowest member of the Conglomerate shown on this mountain was exposed as shown in the section (plate I). This stratum is a coarse pebbly sandstone about 100 feet thick. In a hollow at the head of a small drain, a bend of about  $85^{\circ}$  in this rock was seen. This was probably very near the axis of the fold, and, in consequence, the rock had not been shattered as much as higher up on the arch of the fold. The section shows how much of the folded rocks has been eroded. It will also be seen that the higher members of the Conglomerate series have been entirely eroded from the top of Brush Mountain. On the slope of the mountain a thickness of 1,350 feet of steeply inclined Conglomerate and inter-conglomerate beds has been measured, and it is probable, from certain slope indications, that there is an additional thickness above this of 200 to 400 feet which is not well exposed, and was not measured.

Of this great thickness of rock only about 700 feet remain on the top of the mountain, where the beds are horizontal.

On the face of Cumberland Mountain a thickness of the Conglomerate series occurs which approximates 2,000 feet. The relation which these beds hold to those on Brush Mountain has not yet been satisfactorily determined. If there be simply another bend or fold along the valley of Martin's Fork, this series must come below the Brush Mountain rocks, and we then would have a total thickness of the Conglomerate series of between three and four thousand feet, a thickness which is greater than is certainly known to occur at any other point. For this reason it seems probable that there is a fault between the two mountains, along the upper Martin's Fork valley, and it has been so indicated in the section. This fault has, in fact, probably determined the course of Martin's Fork.

The section (plate II) of Cumberland Mountain at Crank's Gap, between fifteen and twenty miles further up the moun-

tain, shows a structure somewhat similar to that just discussed, only in this case the fold has not been as great, and, in consequence, erosion has not had so great an effect. The mountain is, therefore, undivided by any valley, and the rocks are still intact at the folds.

The forces of elevation have evidently acted in the same direction, and we have here the two changes in dip—a steep dip on the northwest slope, a much more gentle dip on the main body of the mountain, and a steeper dip again at the crest. The first change in dip, as on Brush Mountain, is due to a fold, while it is also uncertain if the upper change be due to a fold or a fault. If it be a fold, there is here shown a thickness of about 2,600 feet of the Conglomerate series; if a fault, about 2,000 feet. There is, however, very slight evidence of a fault.

Pine Mountain is a simple monoclinical mountain, formed by an uplift along a fault line which has a course of about N. 30° E. The rocks are the same as on the Cumberland Mountain, except that they do not extend as low down.

The highest rocks of the Pine Mountain are those of the Conglomerate series. At the time of its elevation the Carboniferous strata, which originally covered all this region, and which are now found in the Black Mountains, covered the Pine Mountain, which was therefore of far greater height than at present; but as these rocks are comparatively soft and friable, they have been eroded.

The mountain is of comparatively recent elevation, as is proved by the fact that the crest has retreated but a short distance from the fault line. At some few places, one of which happens to be where the section line (plate I) crosses, the retreat of the crest has been as much as a half mile; but at many other places it is only a few hundred feet. Undisturbed horizontal coal measures are found to the northwest of the fault line, and but a few hundred feet from it.

The amount of uplift along this fault has not yet been accurately determined, for the reason that the exact geological position of the horizontal coal measures on the opposite side

of the fault line is not known. The uplift is certainly over three thousand feet, for that thickness of strata is found on Pine Mountain at the point crossed by the section (plate I). It was impossible here, as generally on Pine Mountain, to obtain a complete section, as the lower rocks are mostly covered by a great thickness of talus from those above.

The Conglomerate series here is two thousand feet thick. It is not as well exposed as on Cumberland Mountain. The lower rocks, the Sub-carboniferous limestone, the Waverly, and the Devonian, &c., are so imperfectly exposed that no reliable estimates of their thickness can be given.

The Black Mountains are irregular ridges and peaks, presenting the familiar topographical features which are formed by the action of water upon horizontal strata.

They are the continuation of the Log Mountains to the northeast, and the geological equivalents of the "Cumberland table-land" of Tennessee.

They frequently reach a height above the valley of about two thousand feet, equivalent to 3,400 to 3,500 feet above tide.

The character of their rock structure will be seen from the sections (plates I and III). The prevailing type of rock is shaly or thin-bedded sandstone. These are diversified by occasional harder, massive sandstones, which are more common toward the upper part of the sections. Limestones, except as occasional calcareous concretions, are not found. The thickness of coal measures in this valley is greater than in any other part of Kentucky by many hundred feet. The number of coals is also greater, and they differ widely in position from any other region. Sufficient work has not been done to enable us to give a general section which will serve as a key to the stratification of this whole valley; but a single comparison of the general section for Greenup, Carter, and Boyd counties, by Mr. Crandall, the only one heretofore constructed for any portion of Eastern Kentucky, with the sections of this report, will show the great difference in the structure of this region. It shows also the impossibility of making a general section which will hold over a large area.



The section in the Black Mountains (plate I) shows 11 different coals. The section of Gray's Peak (plate III) shows 9 coals. Neither of these sections are by any means complete. It is probable that, on more thorough examination, several other coal beds will be discovered. A section of one of the Log Mountains, made in 1875 by Mr. Crandall, showed no less than 17 different coals. It will be seen from the sections of plate III that the covered spaces, where the rocks were not exposed, aggregate from one third to one half the whole thickness. There is, therefore, every reason to suppose that other coals will be found occupying some of these spaces. There is the more reason for this in the fact that this region is almost entirely undeveloped. There has been no search for coal; and in making sections, reliance has been placed entirely upon natural exposures. The coals vary in thickness from a few inches to five feet. The most common thickness, so far as seen, is about two feet; but workable seams of three feet and upwards are known at four or five different levels.

The quality of the coals of this valley is most excellent. The proportion of ash and sulphur is very low in all that have yet been analyzed, with the exception of one cannel coal, and the fixed carbon is high.

The following analyses, by Dr. Peter and Mr. Talbutt, of two samples from the vicinity of Mt. Pleasant, Harlan county, show the excellent quality just referred to:

	No. 1.	No. 2.
Moisture . . . . .	1.70	5.20
Volatile combustible matter. . . . .	35.70	31.26
Fixed carbon . . . . .	59.60	60.08
Ash . . . . .	3.00	3.46
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Coke . . . . .	62.60	65.54
Sulphur . . . . .	0.750	0.618
Specific gravity . . . . .	1.289	1.356

No. 1 is from Howard's bank, Clover Fork.

No. 2 is from Skidmore's bank, Martin's Fork.

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# INDEX.

(THE NUMBERS REFER TO THOSE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGES.)

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Appendix . . . . .	159
Area of Menifee county . . . . .	169
Barium and strontium chlorides in Glen Font brine . . . . .	117, 118
Barium and strontium chlorides in Goose Creek brine . . . . .	52
Baryta sulphate, Owen county . . . . .	134
Barren county marl and nitre earth . . . . .	22, 23
Bath county iron ores and pig irons. . . . .	18 to 22
Bath Furnace. . . . .	207
Beaver Furnace, Menifee county . . . . .	207
Bell county coals, soils, and subsoils . . . . .	23 to 35
Bellefonte Furnace pig iron . . . . .	37
Bessemer process; can phosphorus be removed by it? . . . . .	17
Big Stone Gap . . . . .	229, 230
Bittern water, Glen Font Salt-works . . . . .	117
Bittern water, composition and uses of, Goose Creek Salt-works. . . . .	52, 53
Bituminous silicious petrification, Lawrence county . . . . .	103
Bituminous shale . . . . .	84, 85, 114, 115, 126, 146, 175
Black band iron ores, Lawrence county . . . . .	100, 101
Black Mountains . . . . .	233, 448, 452
Block iron ore of Carter county . . . . .	42
Boone county clay . . . . .	35, 36
Breathitt county coals . . . . .	38 to 42
Breckinridge Cannel Coal district, report on, by C. J. Norwood . . . . .	341 to 364
Breckinridge cannel coal, characters of, and yield of oil, &c. . . . .	349, 350, 351
Breckinridge coal bank . . . . .	411
Breckinridge Coal and Oil Company's mines. . . . .	356
Brierfields' Gap. . . . .	227
Britton's Gap. . . . .	227
Brush Mountain . . . . .	225, 449
Caney creek coals. . . . .	412
Cannel coals, 39, 40, 80, 83, 84, 85, 92 to 95, 111, 112, 115, 116, 135, 148, 264, 273 to 275, 278, 281, 303, 341 to 364	
Carter county block iron ore and pig irons . . . . .	42 to 44
Chemical report of the soils, coals, ores, &c., &c., &c., of Kentucky, by Robert Peter, M. D., assisted by John H. Talbutt, S. B. . . . .	1 to 166
Chester Group . . . . .	433
Chester Group in Hancock county . . . . .	393
Christian county coals, mineral waters, and soils. . . . .	44 to 51
Clay county; Goose creek salt waters, &c. . . . .	51 to 53
Clay, German glass-pot . . . . .	162 to 164

Clay iron-stone, Estill county . . . . .	63
Clay, Rockcastle county . . . . .	141
Clays . . . . .	35, 59, 62, 63, 70 to 75, 107, 108, 109
Clinch Mountain . . . . .	232
Clinton county marls, clay, and coal . . . . .	53, 54
Clinton iron ore of Cumberland Gap . . . . .	17, 18, 159, 160, 223, 244 to 254
Clinton iron ore of Red River region . . . . .	201 to 203
Cloverport Coal and Oil Company, their property, &c. . . . .	80, 83, 84, 343, 344
Coals of Bell county . . . . .	23 to 28
Coals in Black Mountain and Log Mountain . . . . .	234
Coal B. . . . .	292, 295, 321, 322, 324
Coal, 9 feet thick, near Big Stone Gap . . . . .	236
Coal, the Chester . . . . .	436
Coals of Christian county . . . . .	44, 45
Coal, Cumberland mines, Clinton county . . . . .	54
Coals of Daviess county . . . . .	59 to 61
Coal D . . . . .	308, 309, 323, 324
Coal field, western, erosion in . . . . .	290
Coals, Floyd county . . . . .	68 to 70
Coals of Greenup county . . . . .	75, 76
Coal, Grayson county . . . . .	70
Coals of Hancock county . . . . .	80 to 84, 395, 399, 419
Coals, Harlan county . . . . .	84, 85, 235, 236
Coal, Main Hawesville . . . . .	408 to 422
Coals of Hopkins county . . . . .	86 to 89
Coal H . . . . .	442
Coals of Jackson county . . . . .	92, 93
Coals, Johnson county . . . . .	94, 95
Coal J . . . . .	331
Coal K . . . . .	442
Coals, Lawrence county . . . . .	101, 102
Coals, Lee county . . . . .	103 to 105
Coals in Log Mountain, number of beds, quality of . . . . .	453
Coal L. . . . .	332, 439 to 441
Coals, lowest on Kentucky river near mouth of South Fork . . . . .	266
Coals, Menifee county . . . . .	120, 121, 173, 175, 176, 177
Coal measures, thickness of in Cumberland Mountains, &c. . . . .	236, 452
Coals of McLean county . . . . .	114, 115
Coals, Madison county . . . . .	109, 110
Coals, Magoffin county . . . . .	110 to 112
Coals, Martin county . . . . .	112 to 114
Coals, Morgan county . . . . .	115, 116
Coals, Muhlenburg county . . . . .	122, 123
Coal No. 1 . . . . .	268, 269
Coals Nos. 2 and 3 . . . . .	269 to 273
Coal No. 4 . . . . .	439
Coal No. 7 . . . . .	439
Coals, Ohio county . . . . .	125 to 132, 405
Coal mines near Owensboro . . . . .	308
Coals, Owsley county . . . . .	135, 136
Coals, Perry county . . . . .	136 to 138
Coal, Pulaski county . . . . .	138, 139

Coals, sub-conglomerate, on Red river, Slate and Beaver creeks . . . . .	258, 266
Coals, relation of ash proportion to specific gravity . . . . .	12, 13, 27, 28, 42
Coals, Rockcastle county . . . . .	140, 141
Coals, extremes of composition of, sulphur in . . . . .	11, 12
Coal from Winter's Gap, Tennessee. . . . .	161
Coals, Wolfe county . . . . .	147 to 149
Conglomerate, thickness of on Cumberland Mountain . . . . .	450
Cottage Furnace . . . . .	207
Crab Orchard salts . . . . .	107, 108
Crandall and Moore, geology of upper part of Cumberland river valley . . .	447 to 454
Crandall, A. R., report on the geology of Menifee county . . . . .	167 to 240
Crank's Gap . . . . .	227
Cumberland Gap, height of . . . . .	225
Cumberland Gap, iron ores in vicinity of . . . . .	241 to 254
Cumberland Mountains, geology of, &c. . . . .	220, 449
Cumberland river valley, geology of upper part, by Crandall and Moore . . .	447 to 454
Daviess county mineral waters, soils, clay, and coals . . . . .	54 to 61
DeFriese, on the timbers of the North Cumberland—Bell and Harlan counties, 365 to 388	
Drainage of Menifee county . . . . .	169
Dyestone ore of Tennessee . . . . .	159, 160
Edmonson county iron ores and clays . . . . .	61 to 63
Estill county iron ores and pig irons . . . . .	63 to 65
Estill Furnace . . . . .	207
Fayette county phosphatic limestone and soils . . . . .	65 to 68
Fertilizers, mineral and atmospheric elements . . . . .	9
Fire-clay, German glass-pot . . . . .	162 to 164
Fire-clay in Menifee county . . . . .	173
Fleming coal mine, section at . . . . .	321
Floyd county coals . . . . .	68 to 70
Galena from Owen county . . . . .	133, 134
Geology of portions of upper Cumberland river valley, by Crandall and Moore, 447 to 454	
Geology of Hancock county . . . . .	393
Geology of Menifee county, by A. R. Crandall . . . . .	167 to 240
Geological reconnoissance of the region adjacent to the Kentucky and Virginia State line, &c., by P. N. Moore . . . . .	217 to 240
Geology of the Red River iron region . . . . .	186, 187
Geology of the country between the Red and Kentucky rivers . . . . .	260 to 263
Geology of a section from near Campton, Wolfe county, to the mouth of Trouble- some creek, Breathitt county, by P. N. Moore. . . . .	255 to 284
Geology of the region adjacent to the eastern border of the western coal field, &c., by P. N. Moore. . . . .	423 to 444
German glass-pot fire-clay . . . . .	162 to 164
Glen Font Salt-works, Meade county . . . . .	116 to 120
Goose Creek Salt-works, Clay county . . . . .	51 to 53
Grayson county coal, clays, and iron ore . . . . .	70 to 75
Greenup county coals, pig irons, iron furnace slag, and soils . . . . .	75 to 80
Haddock's coal mines . . . . .	275
Hancock county coals. . . . .	80 to 84, 410
Hancock county, geology of, by P. N. Moore . . . . .	389 to 422
Hancock county, topography of . . . . .	391
Harlan county coals. . . . .	84, 85
Hecla coal mines . . . . .	322

Henderson's process for purification of iron . . . . .	15, 16, 17
Henry county metallic lead and limestone . . . . .	85, 86
Hopkins county coals and soils . . . . .	86 to 92
Hunnewell Furnace pig iron . . . . .	76 to 78
Indianaite of E. T. Cox . . . . .	164, 165
Iron furnace slag, Raccoon Furnace . . . . .	78
Iron ores, black band, Lawrence county . . . . .	100, 101
Iron ores of Boyd county . . . . .	36, 37
Iron ores, carbonates . . . . .	36, 37
Iron Hill, Carter county . . . . .	43, 44
Iron ore, Clinton, of Cumberland Gap . . . . .	17, 18
Iron ores south of Cloverport . . . . .	444
Iron ores near Cumberland Gap, P. N. Moore's report . . . . .	241 to 254
Iron ores of Edmonson county . . . . .	61, 62
Iron ores of Estill county . . . . .	63, 64
Iron ore of Grayson county . . . . .	74
Iron, Henderson's process for purification of . . . . .	15, 16, 17
Iron ores of Kentucky, extremes of proportions of iron and phosphorus in . . . . .	13
Iron ore, limestone ore, Meniffee county . . . . .	174, 176, 177
Iron ores, limonite, of Bath county . . . . .	18 to 20
Irons, pig . . . . .	18, 20 to 22, 37 to 38, 76 to 78
Iron, pig, of Bath county . . . . .	20 to 22
Iron, pig, extremes of composition of . . . . .	18
Iron, pig, of Greenup county . . . . .	76 to 78
Iron furnaces in Red River region, dimensions of . . . . .	208
Iron manufacture of the Red River region . . . . .	204 to 215
Iron ores of the Red River region . . . . .	186 to 204
Iron, production of in Red River region . . . . .	216
Iron of Red River region, quality of . . . . .	215
Jackson county coals . . . . .	92, 93
Jessamine county mineral water . . . . .	93, 94
Johnson county coals . . . . .	94, 95
Kentucky natural resources . . . . .	10, 11
Knox county ferruginous limestone and soils . . . . .	95 to 98
Laurel county soils . . . . .	98 to 100
Laurel Furnace pig iron . . . . .	77, 78
Lawrence county black band iron ores, coals, limonite ores, &c. . . . .	100 to 103
Lead, metallic, Henry county . . . . .	85
Lead ores in Chester rocks . . . . .	444
Lee county coals . . . . .	103 to 105
Lewis county soils . . . . .	105 to 107
Leitchfield marls . . . . .	70 to 75, 346, 347, 435
Limestone, ferruginous, Knox county . . . . .	95, 96
Limestone, Lower Silurian, Henry county . . . . .	86
Limestone, oölitic, at Hopkinsville . . . . .	335
Limestone, phosphatic, of Fayette county . . . . .	18
Limonite iron ores, Bath county . . . . .	18 to 20
Limonite iron ores, Edmonson county . . . . .	61, 62
Limonite iron ores, Estill county . . . . .	63, 64
Limonite iron ore of Grayson county . . . . .	74
Limonite iron ores, Lawrence county . . . . .	102, 103

Limonite iron ore, Menifee county . . . . .	121
Limonite iron ores, Ohio county . . . . .	132, 133
Limestone ore of Red River region. . . . .	188
Limestone (South Carrollton) No. 11 . . . . .	297
Lincoln county clay and Crab Orchard salts . . . . .	107, 108
Lithographic limestone, Menifee county . . . . .	178
Little Black Mountain . . . . .	228, 235
McLean county bituminous shale and coals . . . . .	114, 115
Madison county clays and coals . . . . .	108 to 110
Magoffin county coals . . . . .	110 to 112
Marl, Barren county . . . . .	22
Marly clays of Grayson county and uses . . . . .	70 to 75
Marls or shales of the Chester Group ("Leitchfield marls") . . . . .	70 to 75, 346, 347, 435
Marly clay, Clinton county . . . . .	53
Martin county coals. . . . .	112 to 114
Menifee county coals and iron ore . . . . .	120, 121
Menifee county, report on the geology of, by A. R. Crandall . . . . .	167 to 240
Menifee county soils, timber, coals, clays, &c., &c. . . . .	167 to 240
Metallie iron (meteoric?), Rockcastle county . . . . .	142
Mineral water, bored well of Mr. Trice . . . . .	336 <sup>h</sup>
Mineral waters, chalybeate and alum, Daviess county . . . . .	54 to 56 <sup>r</sup>
Mineral waters, chalybeate, near Lewis . . . . .	307 <sup>e</sup>
Mineral water, chalybeate, Webster county . . . . .	143 <sup>r</sup>
Mineral waters, chalybeate, Whitley county . . . . .	145 <sup>c</sup>
Mineral water, chalybeate, Pulaski county . . . . .	139
Mineral water, chalybeate, Sebree . . . . .	314 <sup>r</sup>
Mineral water of Christian county, salt sulphur, Hopkinsville. . . . .	45, 46 <sup>r</sup>
Mineral waters, sulphur, &c., Daviess county . . . . .	56, 57 <sup>r</sup>
Mineral water, salt sulphur, at Nicholasville, Jessamine county . . . . .	93, 94 <sup>x</sup>
Mineral waters, Sulphur Springs, Sebree . . . . .	313 <sup>x</sup>
Mineral water, sulphur, Webster county . . . . .	143 <sup>r</sup>
Moore, P. N., report on iron ores near Cumberland Gap . . . . .	241 to 254
Moore, P. N., geology of a section from near Campton, Wolfe county, to the mouth of Troublesome creek, Breathitt county . . . . .	255 to 284
Moore, P. N., on the geology of Hancock county . . . . .	389 to 422
Moore, P. N., report on a geological reconnoissance of the region adjacent to the Kentucky and Virginia State line, &c. . . . .	217 to 240
Moore, P. N., report on the iron ores and iron manufacture of the Red River region . . . . .	183 to 216
Moore, P. N., geology of the region adjacent to the eastern border of the western coal field, from the Louisville, Paducah and Southwestern Railway to the Ohio river. . . . .	423 to 444
Morgan county coals . . . . .	115, 116
Mt. Savage Furnace pig irons . . . . .	43, 44
Muhlenburg county coals and soils . . . . .	122 to 125
Nitre earth of Barren county . . . . .	22
Nitrogen, how supplied to plants. . . . .	9
Norwood, Chas. J., report on the Breckinridge cannel coal district . . . . .	341 to 364
Norwood, Chas. J., examinations along the north and south running railways of Western Kentucky . . . . .	285 to 338
Ohio county coals and iron ores . . . . .	125 to 133
Old Slate Furnace ore bank . . . . .	201

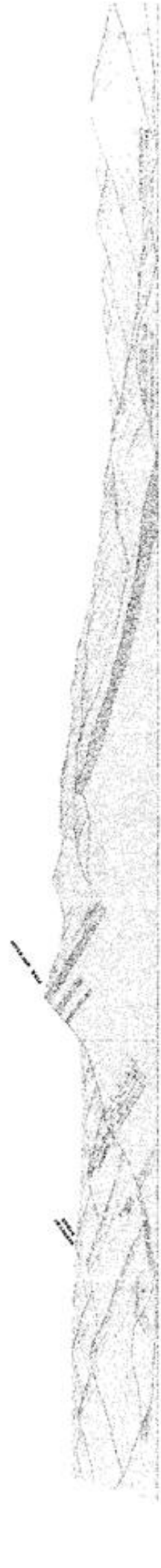
Oölitic limestone--Hopkinsville . . . . .	335
Owen county galena and baryta sulphate . . . . .	133, 134
Owsley county coals . . . . .	135, 136
Peach Orchard coal . . . . .	101, 102
Pennington's Gap . . . . .	229
Pennsylvania Furnace pig iron . . . . .	76 to 78
Perry county coals . . . . .	136 to 138
Peter, Robert, M. D., sixth chemical report . . . . .	1 to 166
Phosphorus in iron, influence of, and modes of its removal . . . . .	13, 14, 15
Phosphorus in iron furnace cinder . . . . .	14, 78
Phosphatic limestone, Fayette county . . . . .	18, 65
Pine Mountain . . . . .	236, 451
Pig iron of Bath county . . . . .	20 to 22
Pig irons of Boyd county . . . . .	37, 38
Pig irons of Carter county . . . . .	43, 44
Pig iron from Clinton ore . . . . .	160, 161
Pig iron, Cumberland Gap Furnace, from Clinton ore . . . . .	253
Pig irons of Estill county . . . . .	64, 65
Pig iron, extremes of composition of . . . . .	18
Pig irons of Greenup county . . . . .	76 to 78
Poor Valley . . . . .	227
Powell Valley . . . . .	227
Pulaski county coals and chalybeate water . . . . .	138, 139
Raccoon Furnace slag . . . . .	78
Railroad, Evansville, Owensboro and Nashville . . . . .	391
Railroad, St. Louis and Southeastern . . . . .	310
Railways of Western Kentucky running north and south, examinations along, 285 to 338	
Red River Furnace . . . . .	207
Red River Iron Company's furnaces . . . . .	209
Red river iron, quality of . . . . .	215
Red River Furnace pig irons . . . . .	64, 65
Red River region, report on the iron ores and manufacture of . . . . .	163 to 216
Rockcastle Chalybeate Springs, Pulaski county . . . . .	139, 140
Rockcastle county coals, clay, and metallic iron . . . . .	140 to 143
St. Bernard mines (coal) . . . . .	323
St. Louis Group . . . . .	430
Salt water, salt, bittern, &c., Glen Font Salt-works . . . . .	116 to 130
Salt well on Troublesome creek . . . . .	279
Salt-works, Goose Creek, Clay county . . . . .	51 to 53
Section above the Breckinridge coal . . . . .	403
Section, Tar Fork, south of Cloverport . . . . .	434
Section at Fleming coal mine . . . . .	321
Sections, general, of Hancock county . . . . .	396, 398
Section on Looney's Branch, in Harlan county . . . . .	235
Section showing the coals in the Henderson shaft . . . . .	310
Section at Diamond mines and at other points . . . . .	325 to 333
Sections, geological, on Evansville, Owensboro, and Nashville Railroad, 294, 295, 296, 298, 299, 300, 303	
Sections at the "Great Cut" . . . . .	317
Sections near Madisonville . . . . .	318, 319, 320
Section two and a half miles below Owensboro . . . . .	308



Section on Persimmon Branch, Hancock county . . . . .	415
Sections of "Schlesinger's shaft," &c. . . . .	311, 312
Section two and a half miles from Slaughterville. . . . .	316
Section on Troublesome creek, below mouth of Buckhorn creek. . . . .	279
Sections of wells sunk by Breckinridge Petroleum Company on waters of Tar Fork . . . . .	431
Slate Furnace in Bath county . . . . .	205
Soils, &c., of Bell county . . . . .	28 to 35
Soils of Christian county . . . . .	46 to 51
Soils of Daviess county . . . . .	57 to 59
Soils of Fayette county . . . . .	66 to 68
Soils of Greenup county. . . . .	79, 80
Soils of Hopkins county. . . . .	89 to 92
Soil, insoluble silicates of . . . . .	7, 8
Soils of Kentucky, limits of variation of composition of . . . . .	5
Soils of Knox county . . . . .	96 to 98
Soils of Laurel county . . . . .	98 to 100
Soils, Lewis county . . . . .	105 to 107
Soils of Menifee county . . . . .	179
Soils, Muhlenburg county . . . . .	123, 124
Soil, organic matters of, influence of . . . . .	7
Soils, rich and poor, characteristics of. . . . .	5, 6
Soils, Webster county . . . . .	144, 145
Soil, Whitley county . . . . .	147
Specific gravity of coals compared with ash proportion . . . . .	12, 13, 27, 28, 42
Stone Mountain . . . . .	228
Subsoil, influence of; subsoiling, trenching . . . . .	6, 7, 51
Sulphur in coals . . . . .	11, 12, 26, 27
Table I, composition of soils, subsoils, &c. . . . .	150, 151
Table II, composition of coals . . . . .	152 to 155
Table III, composition of iron ores (limonites) . . . . .	155, 156
Table IV, composition of iron ores (clay iron-stones) . . . . .	156
Table V, composition of pig irons . . . . .	157
Tables VI and VII, composition of clays, marly shales, marls, &c. . . . .	158
Table of the timbers of Bell and Harlan counties . . . . .	385 to 388
Tar Spring sandstone . . . . .	392
Tar Springs . . . . .	435
Timber of Menifee county . . . . .	180 to 182
Timbers of the North Cumberland—Bell and Harlan counties—by Lafayette H. DeFriese. . . . .	365 to 388
Topography of the country between the Red and Kentucky rivers. . . . .	258
Water, influence of on the soil . . . . .	6
Webster county mineral waters and soils . . . . .	143 to 145
Western coal field, geology of region adjacent to eastern border. . . . .	423 to 444
Whitley county mineral waters, bituminous shale, and soils . . . . .	145 to 147
Wolfe county coals, &c. . . . .	147 to 149

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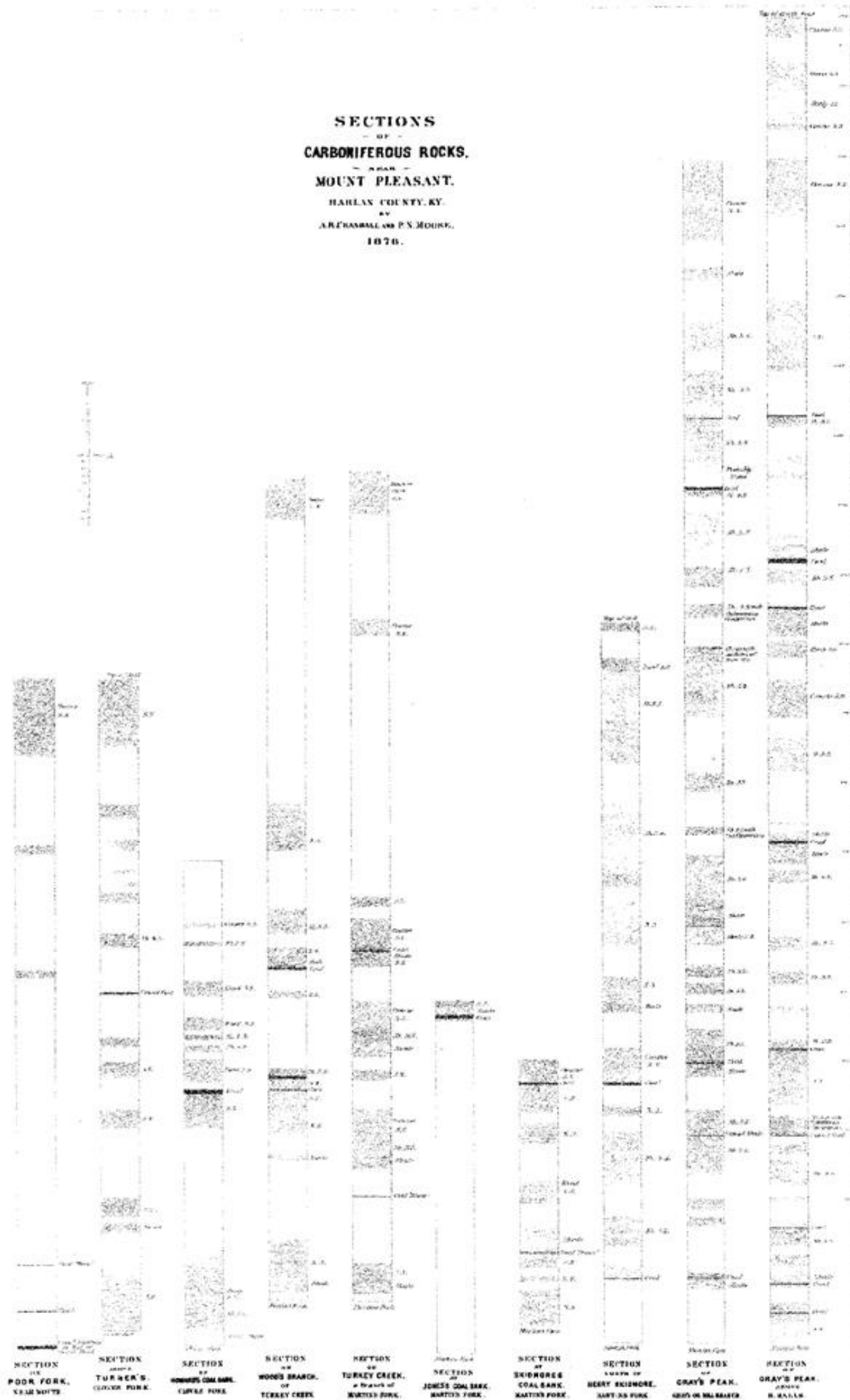
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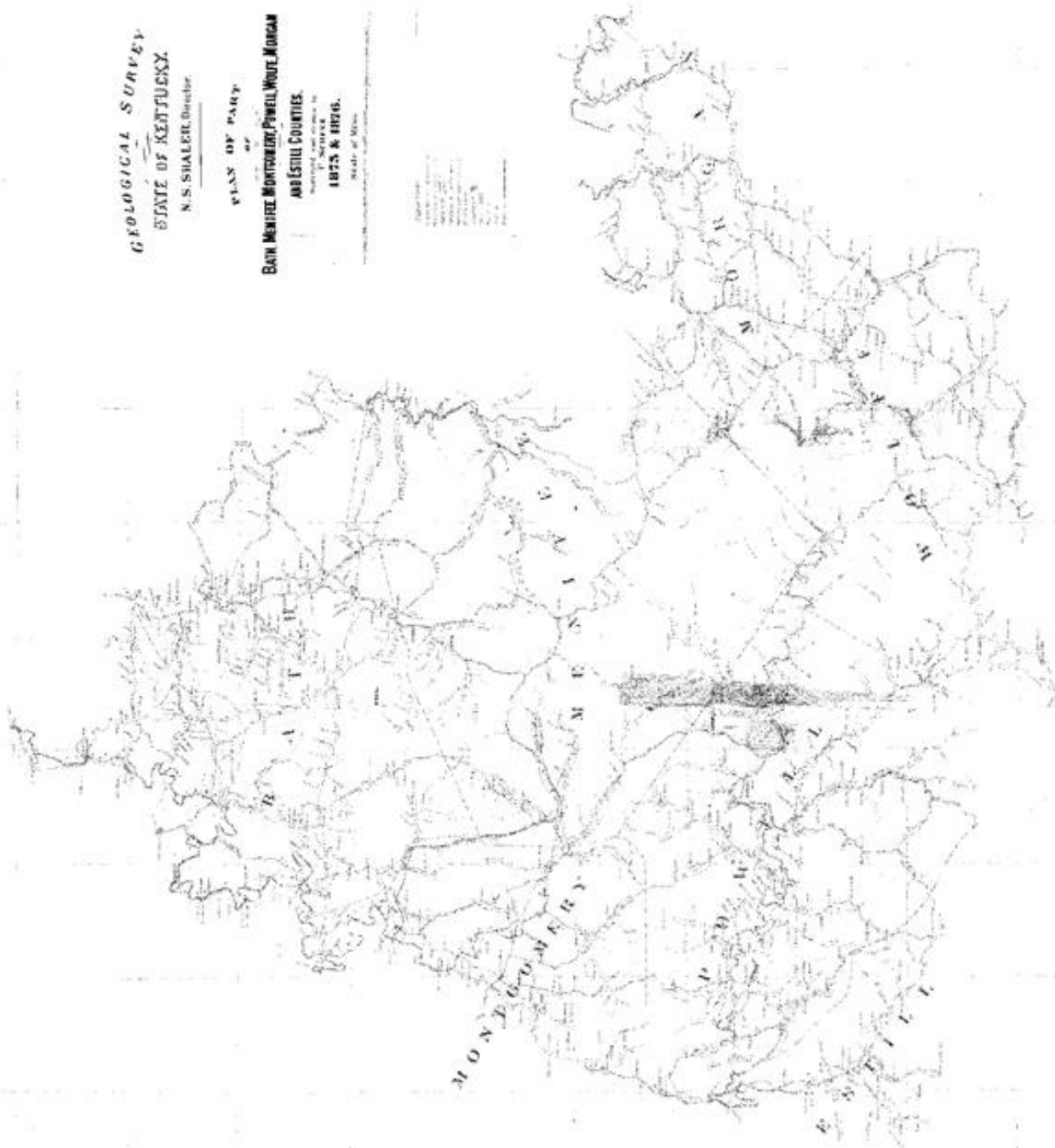
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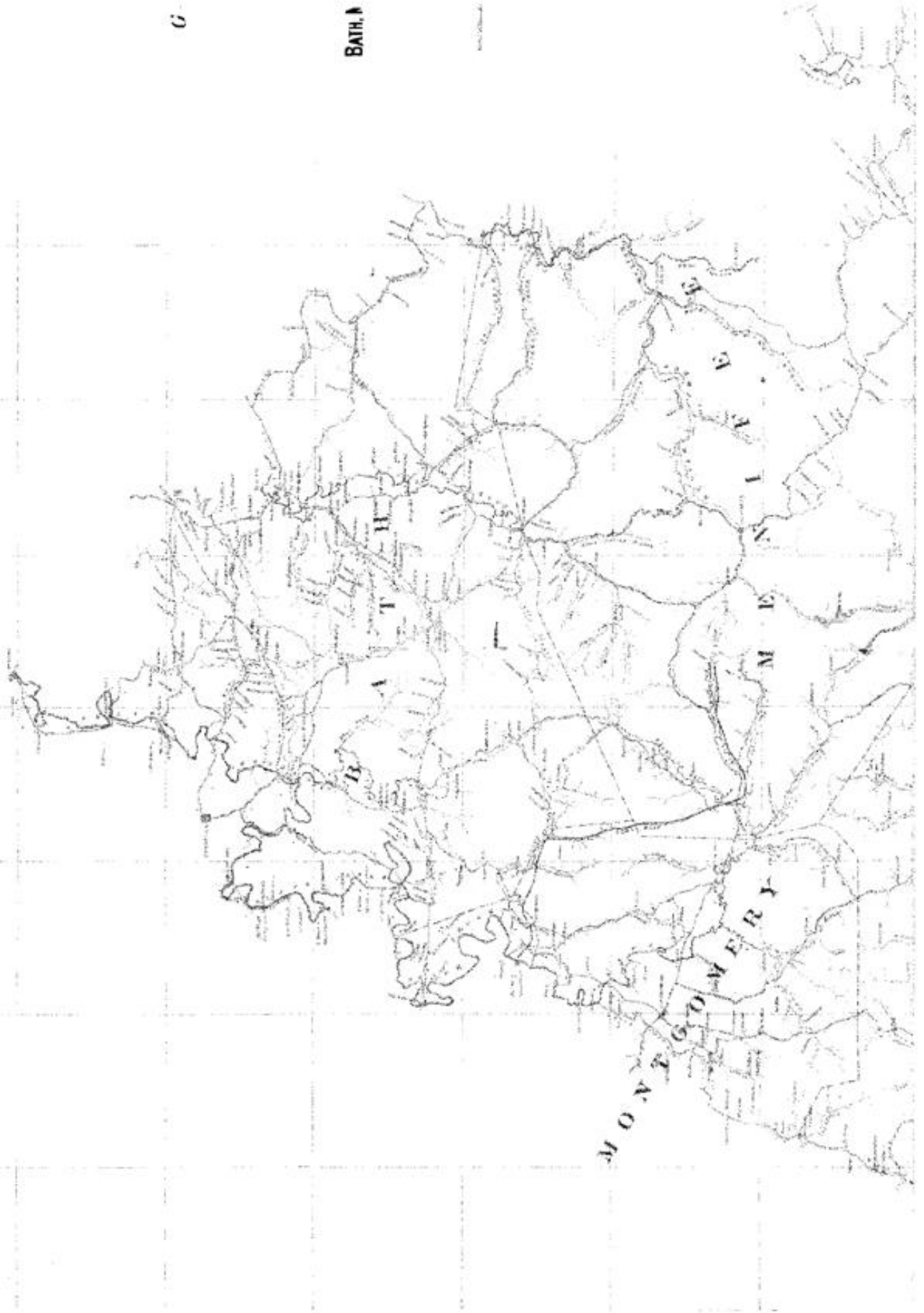
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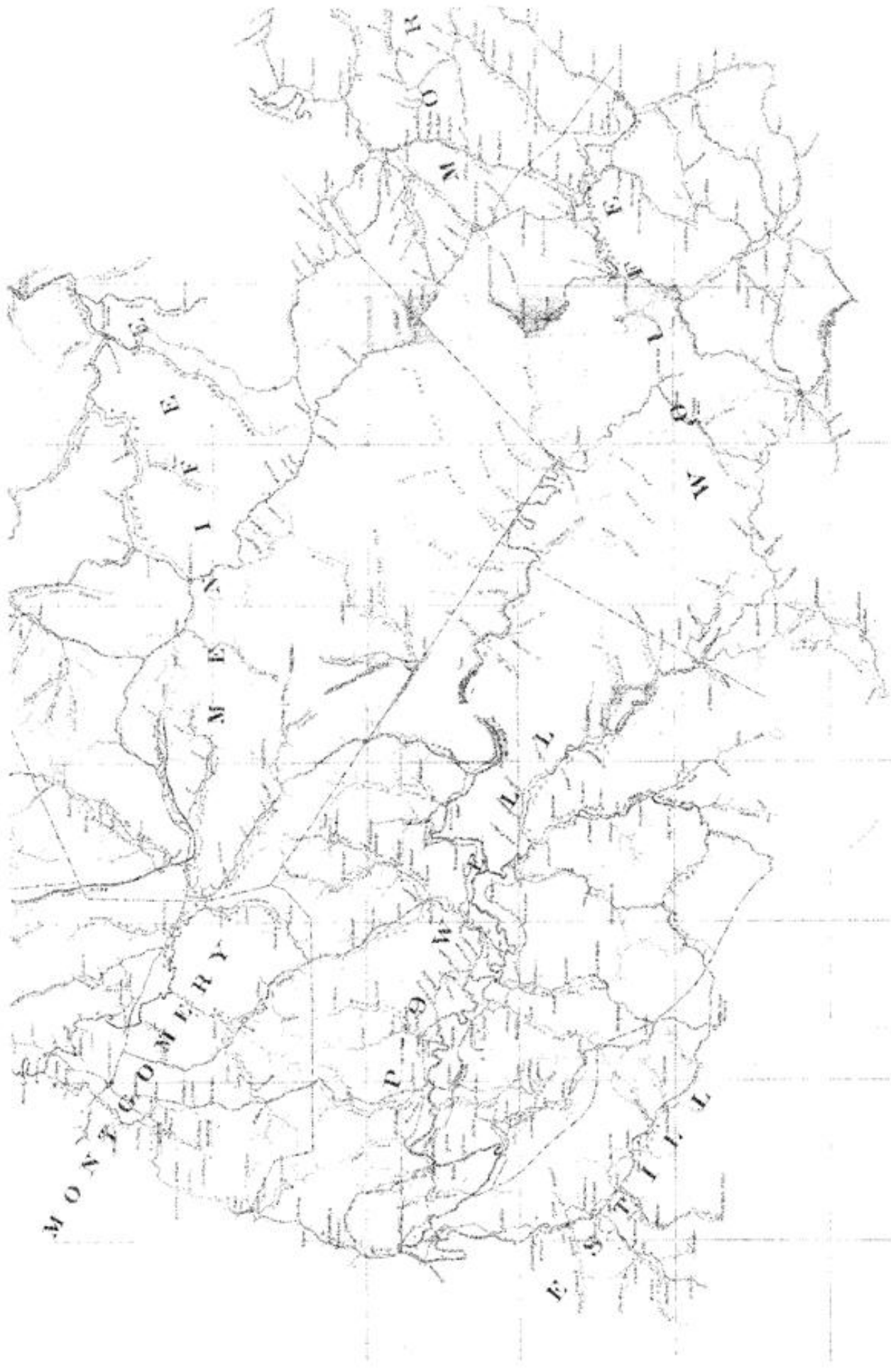


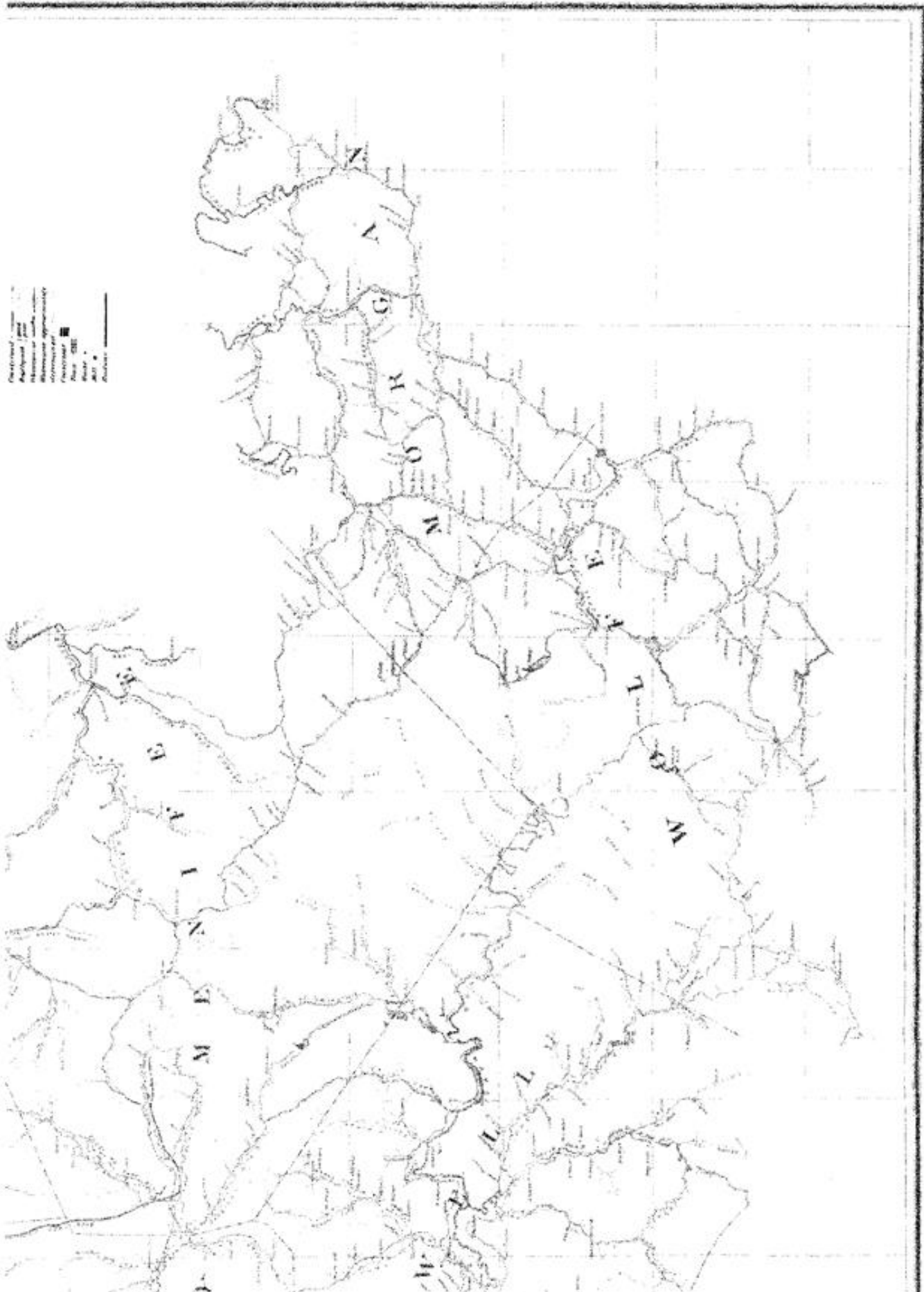
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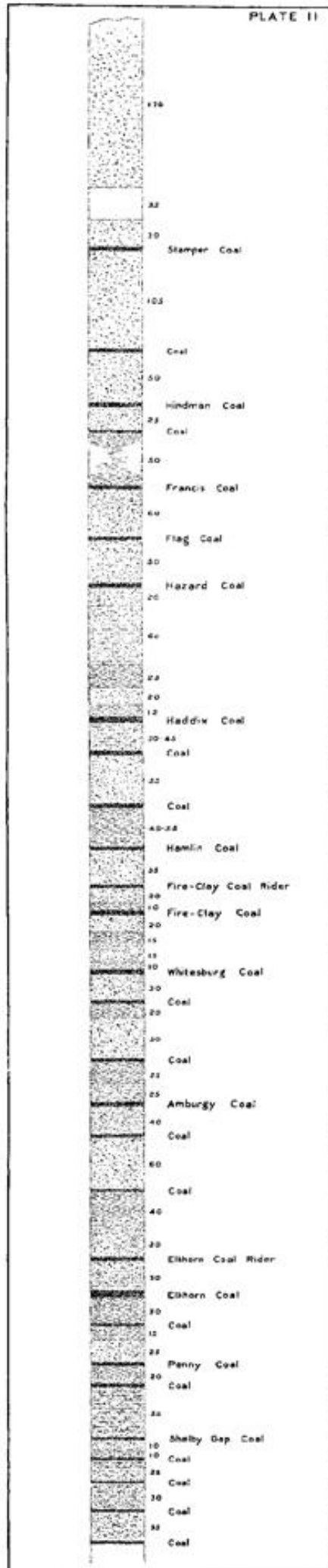






Contour Interval 100  
 Population 1900  
 International Boundary  
 State Boundary  
 County Boundary  
 Township Boundary  
 Rail Road  
 Water  
 Lake  
 River  
 Stream

MINNESOTA  
 RIVER  
 BASIN  
 ELK RIVER  
 CANNON RIVER  
 CROW RIVER  
 MISSOURI RIVER  
 ST. LOUIS RIVER  
 WYOMING RIVER  
 NEBRASKA RIVER  
 IOWA RIVER  
 MISSISSIPPI RIVER  
 ARKANSAS RIVER  
 LOUISIANA RIVER  
 MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST



GENERAL SECTION NORTH OF PINE MOUNTAIN