

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

Mason County

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The junction between the rocks of Lower and Upper Silurian date is very near the eastern line of this county, where it joins Lewis, on the waters of Cabin creek, so that nearly the whole area of the county lies within the limits of the blue limestone formation. The highest beds of this formation, on Cabin creek, lie about one hundred and forty to one hundred and fifty feet below the level of the "Poplar Ridge" of Lewis county.

The river bluffs, back of Maysville, are composed entirely of blue limestone clay, and marlite, belonging to the Lower Silurian Period. At one hundred and fifty to one hundred and sixty feet above the Ohio, there are alternations of thin bedded limestone and marlite. At one hundred and eighty-five the *O. testudinaria* and *Leptaena* beds are in place, with alternations of the lower silicious mudstones, and eighty to one hundred feet higher the *O. lynx* beds commence, and can be traced near the summit level, which is about four hundred feet above the bed of the Ohio river. The highest beds are argillaceous limestones, containing the above fossil, of a dark-bluish-grey color, which turn brownish-grey by exposure, and the derivative soil has much the same color; this is due to the peroxidation of the iron, which exists in the deep-seated rocks as protoxide.

Mason county has long been celebrated for the fine quality of tobacco which it produces. It is generally admitted that the western portion of the county, adjoining Bracken, possesses the best tobacco land, especially in the vicinity of Dover, and on the Tuckahoe ridge. This soil produces that quality of fine silky tobacco used almost exclusively for wrappers. In the vicinity of Dover the hill-sides are generally selected where the middle beds of the blue limestone prevail, characterized chiefly by *L. sericea*, associated with lower beds of silicious mudstone, some layers of which are charged with *Chonetes*? These hill-sides are generally abrupt, and differ but little in their geological appearance from the hills within the range of the blue limestone formation, where the equivalent members of this formation crop out. A genuine virgin tobacco soil was collected in the vicinity of Dover, from Mr. Arthur Fox's farm, about one hundred and fifty feet above the river, together with an exhausted tobacco soil, which, though good at first, has, by cultivation, lost some essential ingredients to the production of the best tobacco.

The soil of the Tuckahoe Ridge must be of a somewhat different character, as it overlies the lynx beds of the blue limestone, which are some two hundred feet or more higher in the formation than the sericea limestones and lower mudstones. Time has not yet permitted the analysis of these tobacco soils.

At Lawrence creek, where the Dover road leaves the Maysville turnpike, there are ledges of thin-bedded blue limestone and soft marly clays and marlites, like those noted in the river hills about one hundred and sixty feet above the Ohio river; and a short distance below the toll-gate, on the Dover turnpike, the lynx and occidentalis beds are in place, about thirty feet below the summit levels of this part of the county. These same beds of a dark bluish-grey color, are seen in a quarry on the north side of the road, opposite the school house, where they have been quarried for metalling the turnpike. This is thirty to fifty feet below the general level of the Tuckahoe Ridge. From the appearance of the crops of wheat on this ridge, in August of 1857, it must be excellent wheat land.

A little above high water, in the vicinity of Dover, there is a great quantity of gravel drift, which no doubt imparts peculiar qualities to the bottom land; but this does not seem to be the soil preferred for tobacco, which is the hill-side soil, fifty to one hundred feet above high water, where the sericea limestones alternate with the chonetes?—silicious mudstones.

The best tobacco land in the vicinity of Germantown is the oak-land, in the so-called Texas District, a few miles south of this town.

The country on the borders of Bracken and Mason lies well for farming, being more level than the northern parts of these counties.

At the point where the viaduct of the Lexington and Maysville railroad crosses the north fork, of the Licking, near Lewisburg, the lynx beds are seventy-five feet above the bed of that stream, and twenty-five feet above the level of the railroad track. The limestone here is bluish-grey in color, and argillaceous, prone to decomposition, and some of the more earthy associated layers have imperfect impressions of what seems to be plants, probably some portions of *fucoides*. The orthis beds here are more solid and less earthy than the other layers, but all are liable to disintegration, and make but inferior wall rock.

The lower beds are not so fossiliferous as the upper; those that do occur seem to be of the same species, viz: *O. lynx*, *L. alternata*, a large *Bellerophon*, and a warted form of *Chaetetea rugosa*.

Near the edge of Mason and Bracken, on the divide between Lee's and Bracken creek, the lynx beds just skim the tops of the ridges, associated with concretionary beds of limestone. The overlying soil supports a growth of sugar-tree, mockernut, hickory, large black walnut, honey-locust, and mulberry. This formation prevails with the accompanying soil and timber all around Washington. To the west of this place the oak-lands are soon reached, indicative of the alternations of testudinary beds and silicious mudstones, affording the best tobacco soil on the table lands of Mason, some of which have a reddish yellow or mulatto color. The oak timber is interstratified with sugar-tree, hickory, walnut, honey-locust, and some beech. Hemp, corn, and wheat are the chief products around Washington. There are, also, extensive stock farms.