

**Excerpts from a 1874
Bureau of Agriculture Report on Tennessee**

Grundy County

GRUNDY COUNTY.

COUNTY SEAT—TRACY CITY.

This county was organized in 1844, from fractions taken from Franklin, Coffee and Warren. It embraces 324 square miles, and has a population, according to the last census, of 3,250, of which only 137 were colored. It is one of the eastern counties of Middle Tennessee, and more than half of it rests upon the Cumberland Table Land.

Topography and Streams. The part of the county that lies upon the Table Land is generally flat, but deeply gashed by the valleys of streams. Sometimes, also, as near Tracy City, knobs rise several hundred feet above the general surface. There being eleven districts in the county, three lie entirely upon the Table Land, and a portion of eight run down into coves and river valleys. Elk River breaks from one of these coves, and is strong enough to make valuable water-power where it bursts out. The head waters of Collins and Sequatchie rivers are also in this county. Many of the streams on the top of the Table Land have sufficient volume for milling purposes, such as the Fiery Gizzard and Fire Scald. These mountain streams are very rapid, having perpendicular falls sometimes of thirty or more feet, especially where they begin to descend into the valleys. The waters are not so bright and sparkling as one is disposed to imagine, but have a yellowish cast. They flow over great layers of sandstone, and are fretted in their courses by detached rocks that have tumbled down in their channels. Some of the wildest gorges in the State are to be met with along these streams—perfect pictures of untamed nature embellished by numerous and varied evergreens. Several of these places of great beauty are found in the vicinity of Beersheba Springs. Laurel Creek Falls may be taken as a type of these mountain rapids. The creek which forms these falls, after flowing on the mountain plateau for several miles, plunges into a deep ravine gashed in the side of the gorge, through which the east fork of Collins River flows, and finds its way down to that stream by a succession of rapids and falls, descending about 1,000 feet in the distance of five miles. The Laurel Creek Falls forms one of several by which the water descends to the foot of the mountain. These falls pitch over a mass of conglomerate rock, some six feet in thickness, which rests upon a bed of crumbling shale. This has been disintegrated and washed out from beneath by the floods, so that the hard and conglomerate sandstone projects a considerable

distance over, which projection increases on the right and below the falls to twenty or thirty feet over the elliptical grotto, some sixty feet in length, and nearly the same in breadth. The water has a fall of thirty feet, which, after striking a broken mass of rocks below, sweeps around to the left, finding its way amidst huge bowlders, at one time resting in a quiet pool, and then dashing headlong down deep chasms darkened by the overhanging trees. The ruggedness and wildness of this gorge fill the mind with emotions of sublimity, and form a picture of mighty convulsions where huge rocks have been piled upon each other, intermingled with fallen trees, in wild confusion. The bosoms of some of these bowlders are covered with wild ferns, which make them resemble green islands in the rugged sea of rocks.

Soils and Productions. A considerable portion of the land in this county may be termed first rate Middle Tennessee land. All the soils in the coves and on the streams produce corn, wheat, clover, and some of them are well adapted to blue-grass. Cotton and tobacco grow well on these bottom lands. They can be bought at from ten to thirty dollars per acre. Such lands in Ohio or Pennsylvania would be worth from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars per acre.

All in all, this county is now one of the most interesting in the State—interesting, because a spirit of enterprise, not very common in Tennessee, is giving the top of the mountain a trial never before made in this, nor in any State in the South. The coal in this county is now at the very foundation of commerce and manufacturing, and by means of the capital and enterprise which it has developed, many other industrial interests have taken a new start.

Among the many interesting developments in this county, nothing is enlisting more valuable and scientific investigations than the effort to utilize lands hitherto regarded as of no value. In this county there are now 100,000 acres that can be bought at from fifty cents to one dollar per acre. Late practical and scientific tests have shown, as is now claimed, that these lands are indeed of considerable value, since they are found to be productive, and they are made accessible by railroad. A highly cultivated and eminently practical Scotchman five years ago settled on lands immediately on the line of railroad, and near the county line between Marion and Grundy, and by a series of actual experiments with fertilizers, has demonstrated that lands which he bought at from sixty cents to one dollar per acre, can be made, with a trifling cost, to produce excellent corn, clover and oats. He claims

that this land, for farming purposes, is equal to the valley land; but in this, while we cannot agree with him, we are glad to know that intelligence and scientific cultivation will make them productive and profitable. For the production of corn and wheat they must be well fertilized; but there are no lands in the State equal to them for the production of fruits, Irish potatoes, and some other vegetables. The soil is sandy, loose, porous and hungry, though it produces clover very well if gypsum is applied to the crop. Mr. E. O. Nathurst, an enterprising and intelligent Swede, now connected with the Tennessee Coal and Railroad Company, residing at Tracy City, by a little extra work from arduous duties as book keeper, made six years ago a vineyard of less than one acre, which in grapes and wine yielded him one year between \$700 and \$800. Experiments by E. F. Colyar at the mines, and by others, prove beyond doubt that for grape culture the top of the mountains has no superior in this country.

Swiss Colony. Near Altamont, in this county, is a most interesting Swiss colony, composed of about sixty families. The establishment and population of this colony is quite a feature in the history of Tennessee. Without means this experiment was made, and for a time the difficulties in the way of success seemed insurmountable; but under the protection of Consul General Hitz, and under the management of Mr. Peter Staub, of Knoxville, the active and enterprising agent for the Swiss government, this colony has been put on a firm basis. They are a most industrious people, and have now clearly demonstrated the value of the lands which they bought at a few cents per acre. The cultivation of the grape and of fruit trees, is among the many interesting vocations of this most industrious people. They are said to be quite satisfied with their new mountain home, and in a few years will be among the most thriving and wealthy of Tennessee's taxpayers. They have two stores and several saw-mills, and possess all the requisites for living within themselves.

Timber and Lumber. On the low lands and in the coves there is an abundance of fine yellow poplar, black walnut, sugar tree, white and black oak, and on the top of the mountain there are two kinds of timber of great value—the yellow pine in large quantities, and chestnut oak, which grows in great abundance, the bark of which is much sought after by tanners. Besides, the top of the mountain is better supplied with *tie timber* than any part of the State accessible by railroad.

Climate and Fruit. It is now well known, after experiments for

twenty-five years, but especially since the railroad was built in 1858, that as a fruit and vegetable country, the top of this mountain surpasses any section in the Southern States. The climate in many respects is about the same as in Pennsylvania, being about 1,500 feet higher than the basin around Nashville, and from the dryness of the atmosphere in the Springs, there is scarcely such a thing known as the fruit being killed by a frost. By a series of experiments, the summers are found to be cooler by several degrees than in the Central Basin, while the crisp, dry air renders it not uncomfortable in winter. Since the whistle of the locomotive summoned to the top of the mountain men with the woodman's axe and the miner's pick in place of the backwoodsman, with the hunter's rifle, the progress in raising and taking care of fruit, cultivating and sending to market cabbages and potatoes, which grow as they do nowhere else in the South, is one of the most cheering signs in the advancing steps of Tennessee.

Bersheeba Springs, in this county, is one of the most delightful and fashionable watering places in the South. The waters are chalybeate and freestone. The growing town at the coal mines, as well as the spring, affords a splendid market for everything raised for sale; and instead of hunters and a half civilized backwoods people, the population is coming to be an industrious and thrifty people, who are beginning to look with as much interest to the question of churches and schools as any people in the State.

Grass and Grazing. One of the great sources of wealth in this county is the native wild grass covering the entire face of the country. This grass, together with a weed called beggar's lice, which grows in great profusion, and is much sought after by cattle in the fall, is equal to the finest blue-grass of Kentucky, from the 15th of April to the 15th of November. During this time the cattle, with salt only, get as fat as it is possible to make them. Such a thing as cattle disease is not known, and by actual experiment often made, for a man with a small capital, buying cattle in the coves in the spring, and grazing them on this mountain for six months, is the surest mode of doubling the capital in that short space of time.

Towns and Schools. The towns are Tracy City, at the end of the railroad, now the county seat, and is quite a growing town, Altamont, the former county seat, and Pelham, a small village on the head of Elk River. Beersheeba Springs may also be reckoned among the number. For two years this county has levied, in addition to the State tax

for school purposes, a tax of thirty cents on the one hundred dollars. No other county in the State has done this—the result is a good system of schools. The Tennessee Coal and Railroad Company, which pays about \$4,000 of taxes, has encouraged the levy of a high tax for schools, and has done everything possible to aid in having public schools permanently established at the mines. One of these schools now requires three teachers, and preparation has been made for keeping it up nine months in the year.

Minerals and Railroad. The great feature of the mountain is the coal. From Tracy City east the whole country is a bed of coal, and the time is coming when these coal fields in the South will be like Newcastle in England, or Scranton in Pennsylvania. In 1854 a company, mainly made up of New York capitalists, commenced building a coal road to what is known as the Sewanee Mines, in Marion county, now, by the new constitution, detached, and attached to Grundy county, and which was completed in 1858. This road is twenty-one miles long, and is the first successful attempt in the South to build a railroad up a mountain of 1,000 feet. The cost of building and equipping this road was about \$850,000. The company, then known as the "Sewanee Mining Company," made a debt of between \$350,000 and \$400,000, the litigation about which resulted in two sales of the entire property in 1860. These two sets of purchasers, at the close of the war, compromised their litigation, and the Tennessee claimants thereupon organized under the new charter of the Tennessee Coal and Railroad Company, and commenced work. The mines and road had been used during the war for army purposes; the road was in a dangerous condition, and the rolling stock was worn out. The work of rebuilding was undertaken without capital, and for a time pecuniary embarrassments threatened the ruin of the enterprise.

The report made by the President and sole manager in 1869, shows the expenditures in rebuilding the road, building cars, miner's houses, etc., to be \$210,658. By this expenditure the work had been increased from four cars per day in 1866 to twelve cars per day in 1869, the mean difference between which was about the aggregate of each year's work. Since that time the entire earnings have been put into the property after relieving the company of the heavy debt made in rebuilding. This company is shipping from forty-five to fifty cars of coal per day, or say 12,000 bushels, which is far ahead of any work of the kind ever done south of the Ohio River.

A few facts will show what such an enterprise is worth to the industry of Tennessee. The company now, in all its departments, gives employment to about 450 persons, including 150 convicts digging coal. The aggregate coal trade, commencing with the first of the year 1866, and ending with the first of October, 1872, was 31,582 cars—8,005,954 bushels, producing \$960,714.48. The other business of the company, sales of goods, lumber, &c., amounts to \$562,860, making the entire receipts \$1,523,574.48. The amount of improvements made for the year 1873, as well as the monthly productions of coal for the same year, may be ascertained by referring to chapter on coal, pp. 190-218, where the minimum and maximum products are given. Around the mines has sprung up a town of 1,000 people, with churches and schools. A branch of the Tennessee State prison has been established there, and 150 convicts are now worked in the mines with great success. The shipments of coal daily are to Atlanta, Chattanooga, Huntsville and Nashville, besides the towns on the line of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. System and close economy in the business of this company have developed a trade altogether beyond the expectations of the parties interested. Besides supplying several railroads, the company is now shipping coal daily to St. Louis. The number of men employed inside the mine is about 250; the whole amount of track under the ground is about nine miles, and the extreme points of the mine worked are 1,500 yards apart. The average thickness of the coal is four feet ten inches. The openings to the mines are three, and cars are loaded from three different chutes. The coal is not brought down an inclined plane, as most of the mines in Pennsylvania, nor is it elevated as in most of the mines in England. All the entries are horizontal, and the coal is brought to the mouth of the pit and dumped into the railroad cars. Practically the mine is inexhaustible, and as a pure coal, valuable alike for grates and manufacturing—making iron as well as making steam—there is perhaps no coal in the United States superior to it. As analyzed by Prof. Safford, it is carbon 65.50, volatile matter 29.00, ashes 5.50. Since this company commenced rebuilding and shipping coal in 1866 the increased demand for coal is one of the most interesting features in the growth of Tennessee. We are assured that shipping 50 cars per day the company is further from supplying the demand than when it was shipping four cars in 1866. A. S. Colyar has been President of the company since 1860, except when the property was abandoned during the war. In his annual report for 1869 occurs the following remarks in reference to the enterprise and coal trade of Tennessee:

Believing that coal was to be the great basis of wealth in Tennessee, as it is in Pennsylvania, and knowing that this could never be while the coal trade here was confined to a sort of huckstering business, as it has been for twenty-five years, I have struggled through difficulties which but few persons will appreciate, to make the company what it now is—capable of supplying the present demand, and as it may increase, of a great and growing manufacturing State, and of supplying the demand upon the well established basis in enterprising communities, that money in coal is to be made by selling large quantities at small profits, instead of small quantities at large profits. Coal can be supplied at Nashville for manufacturing purposes as cheap as in most towns in Pennsylvania, and cheaper than in the manufacturing towns of New England.

The success of this enterprise may be attributed in a great degree to the fact that the stockholders have been more anxious to put it on a firm basis than to declare dividends, believing that fixed and permanent dividends, though delayed, were preferable to early but uncertain dividends. The increase of the business is shown by the following facts :

1866, shipped in October	40,500 bushels.
1867, " " "	92,260 "
1868, " " "	65,250 "
1869, " " "	107,000 "
1870, " " "	144,856 "
1871, " " "	198,755 "
1872, " " "	267,753 "
1873, " " "	300,000 "

This company sold at Nashville for manufacturing purposes in 1866 not exceeding 50,000 bushels. Now the sales at Nashville for manufacturing purposes amount to between 400,000 and 500,000 annually.

The Secretary is indebted to the President of this company for many facts pertaining to this county, and especially for those pertaining to the coal interest, which is the great interest of the county, and is destined in the future to give to it great wealth.

HICKMAN COUNTY.

COUNTY SEAT—CENTERVILLE.

Hickman county, containing 559 square miles, lies on the western side of the great Highland Rim of Middle Tennessee. It was created by the Legislature in 1807, reducing the limits of Dickson county, and