



WEST PENN TRAIL at SALTSBURG'S BLUFF

The rock seen in the cliff across the river from Saltsburg is known to geologists as the Saltsburg Sandstone. That layer of rock extends westward into Ohio and West Virginia. In 1878, State Geologist J.J. Stevenson designated this cliff as the "type locality" for the study of that particular rock layer because this site is where that stratum was first seen, well exposed for study. A type locality is a special place, like an illustration in an encyclopedia consulted by geologists.

Fifty feet above the Saltsburg Sandstone is the Harlem Coal. That coal was formed 300 million years ago when swamp vegetation was buried under muds that hardened to become stone. That coal-forming swamp was located near the coast of an ocean that extended westward as far as Wyoming, where swamp coal also occurs. Immediately above the Harlem Coal, the Ames (Ohio) Limestone bed is rich with fossils of crinoids, which dwelled in shallow ocean water, proof that there was an inland sea shore here.

The Saltsburg Sandstone can also be seen exposed in the face of the cliff that borders the bikeway immediately upriver from Saltsburg. The Ames Limestone can be seen in the railroad cut at Bow Ridge.



Crinoid (sea lily)

