

[E. Johnson to Council.]

Original.

Gentⁿ When last in Annapolis in conversation with one of y^r Hon^{ble} Members M^r Ramsey, I said I was informed by some of the inhabitants of this County near to the Clifts that the Clifts were in places full of a saline matter that they took to be salt Petre in a native state & I promised to examine therein on my return.

I have been under those Clifts & find saline matter in some parts in great abundance of a vitriolic aluminous Taste but have made no experiments therewith yet, from the calls of my profession hindering me, but on the clift at M^{rs} Hollands about three miles below this town on the E. side of Patuxent River we have discovered a salt Lick & the Earth very strongly impregnated with common salt insomuch that a tub of that Earth being put up & water run through it as they draw off Ley from ashes or nitrous earth is so rich as to yield by boiling $\frac{1}{4}$ th part of its quantity good clean fine salt as you may see by the small sample I have sent you by M^r Peregrine Fitzhugh.

Various are the opinions how this is produced: D^r Ja^s Bate says as its on the east side & exposed to the most violent heat of the sun in the afternoon he believes it to be no more than from the sprays of the sea's meeting this Clift & the sun exhaling the more moist whilst the saline particles are left behind & retained in the earth for about 4 inches deep. I am of a contrary opinion as the water of the River is only brackish at that place none are ever biting there or within 12 miles of it & think that the earth is impregnated with salt in a native state which is perpetually ouseing & the sun exhales the moist & fixes the saline particles behind, be this as it may it is a valuable discovery & the Tenants on that land can easily get whatever salt they may want & now only repine that it was not discovered early enough to salt up fish with which are caught there in the spring in great abundance:

The Salt Petre manufactory under my superviser ship I have the satisfaction to inform you emproves much & tho we were so unsuccessful in the first 8 Hhd^s of earth we drew ley from as to get nothing when last at Annapolis other earth has in the last three weeks given us between fifteen & eighteen pounds pure crude nitre but expect a week or two more to have drawn off the ley &c from all the earth I have there in a proper state & shall then proceed to lay in my shed this earth that has been drawn off trash Tob^o lime brickdust &c as a matrix for to receive more ag^t the fall

I am Gent^t y^r Honor^s most obed^t Serv^t

E. Johnson.

Lower Marlbro June 14th 1776.