

Plain, with the possible exception of the Cretaceous. The deposits of Neocene age have been divided into two formations, viz., the Chesapeake and Lafayette formations.

THE CHESAPEAKE FORMATION.—The Chesapeake formation, so called from its extensive development upon the shores of the Chesapeake Bay, extends as a broad belt across the state and occurs likewise in the areas both to the north and the south of Maryland as an important member of the Coastal Plain series. The strata overlie unconformably those of the Pamunkey formation and gradually overlap the latter toward the north, and just beyond the Delaware border rest directly upon the upper Cretaceous beds.

The deposits of the Chesapeake formation consist of sands, clays, marls and diatomaceous beds, the latter composed chiefly of the tests of the microscopic plant forms called diatoms, and mainly confined to the lower portion of the formation. The diatomaceous beds afford fine sections at Pope's creek on the Potomac, at the mouth of Lyon's creek, a tributary of the Patuxent, and at Herring Bay on the west shore of the Chesapeake. At these points the light colored bluffs are very striking objects in the landscape. The nearly pure diatomaceous earth reaches a thickness of about 30 feet, although the remains of diatoms are found scattered in greater or less amounts throughout the overlying strata. This diatomaceous earth can be traced from the eastern shore of Maryland entirely across the state and thence southward into Virginia. From its wide occurrence in the vicinity of Richmond it is sometimes known as "Richmond earth." It was long referred to in the literature of the subject as "Bermuda earth," from its supposed occurrence on the Island of Bermuda, but the specimen upon which the reference was based was ultimately shown to have come from "Bermuda Hundred" on the James river. The diatomaceous earth is frequently described under the names of "Infusorial earth," "Tripoli" and "Silica." The higher portions of the Chesapeake formation are comprised of sands and clays of various colors and frequently carry vast numbers of molluscan shells. Extensive beds of shell marl underlie much of the Miocene country. These deposits become at times cemented into hard limestone ledges. At