The more level portions of the county are most thickly settled. The population is naturally densest in the limestone valleys. Here are the principal towns and practically every foot of the area is capable of cultivation. The slate region, with steeper hills, has several small villages clustered about the slate quarries. Some of the hillsides are too steep for cultivation, but furnish pasturage or are covered with trees. The rougher portions of the county are more thinly populated, but there is practically no waste land. Here and there are residences on the slopes and tops of the steep hills and mountains, some of which are occupied during the entire year and others only during the summer. Some fairly steep slopes have been cultivated by the removal of the larger rocks of the hillside talus. With the exception of Kittatinny (Blue) Mountain, which forms the northern boundary, probably no place within the entire county is more than half a mile from a residence. Kittatinny (Blue) Mountain and the gneiss hills south of the Lehigh Valley are least used.

Population.—Complete statistics of population are difficult to obtain and may be misleading. The political units have changed so many times that inconsistencies are bound to appear unless full explanations show how county, township, borough and city boundaries have been altered from time to time. The following table shows some of the changes in population during the two centuries of occupancy by the white man. When Northampton County was organized in 1752 it is estimated that what now constitutes Lehigh County contained approximately 2,900 inhabitants:

Although the population of some townships has decreased at times, statistics show the gradual increase in population of the county. The slow growth of the township populations, which include those of the small unincorporated villages, and the relatively more rapid growth of the city and boroughs is striking. This is partly due to the extension of borough and city limits, but also indicates a definite trend from rural to urban conditions or generally from agricultural to manufacturing industries. Between 1890 and 1900 the city and borough population first exceeded that of the townships.

Highways.—Lehigh County is well provided with highways, thus rendering all parts readily accessible. In the early days there were several privately-owned turnpikes with toll houses and toll bridges. The turnpikes and most of the bridges have now been taken over by the State or local communities and freed. The improvement of the highways has been very rapid since the appearance of the automobile. Now a fine network of hard-surfaced roads, both concrete and macadam, penetrates all portions of the county. Many of the dirt roads have also been improved. The main highways are kept open during the winter by snow-plows and there is little interference even after the worst snow-storms. Sleighs, once used extensively, have almost completely disappeared.

In that portion of the county underlain by limestones the roads run in every direction and in most cases bear little relation to the streams and their valleys. In contrast, in the slate regions, where the irregularities of topography are more accentuated and the valleys narrow