The only organized group of the region was the band of Moravians that founded Bethlehem in 1741. They came with a fixed purpose to serve as missionaries to the Indians. Their history more properly belongs to Northampton County, although very early they extended their activities beyond its borders. The Indian village of Nain, built by them, was in Lehigh County, and a Moravian group settled early at Emmaus and gave it its biblical name.

Improvements of different kinds came rapidly, but the first community need was for better transportation facilities. In 1735 the first road was laid out. By present locations it extended from about one-fourth mile northwest of Breinigsville, through Macungie, Shimersville, Old and New Zionsville, Hosensack, and thence to North Wales in Montgomery County, where it connected with an existing road to Philadelphia. Other roads quickly followed.

The government of the region was a matter of early concern. When the first settlers arrived the section was part of the original Bucks County, one of the three original counties established by William Penn in 1682. The distance to the county seat and the travel difficulties necessitated smaller units as the settlements increased. On March 11, 1752, Northampton County was established and on March 6, 1812, a portion was separated to constitute Lehigh County. Division into townships also progressed during a period of years. The first township to be organized was Upper Milford in 1737. It later was divided into Upper and Lower Milford. Saucon Township was established in 1743, but at the time included both Lower Saucon Township, Northampton County, and Upper Saucon Township, Lehigh County. The early erection of these two townships indicates the rapidity with which the region was settled. The establishment of other townships by division and alteration continued over a long period.

For many years after its settlement, German was the almost universal language in Lehigh County. The German used was in the beginning the dialect of the Palatinate, but in time many corruptions crept in until Pennsylvania German (erroneously frequently called “Pennsylvania Dutch”) gradually became essentially a distinct dialect and was carried far beyond the borders of Pennsylvania. Although still in common use, especially among the older residents, generally the children of today are unable to speak it. The rapid decrease in use of the dialect during the past few decades has been brought about by its ban in the public schools, good roads and automobiles, rural free mail delivery, the telephone, and the radio.

The further history of Lehigh County is not pertinent to this report. Mills were erected along the streams, taverns opened along the roads, and gradually shops, factories, and villages came into existence. Starting as a purely agricultural region it has gradually passed into a highly industrial one. The population also has become far more mixed as immigrants later came from more varied sources. The development of the various industries of the region will be discussed in later chapters.

Bibliography

Even though some repetition is involved, in that titles given below are also included in the general bibliography, a short selected list of...