NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

INTRODUCTION

By Benjamin L. Miller

Northampton County forms one of the eastern tier of counties bordering the Delaware River and is situated slightly south of the middle of the State. It lies between parallels 40° 32' and 40° 58' and meridians 75° 3' and 75° 87'. It is irregular in shape and has an area of 376 square miles. It includes portions of the following 15' quadrangles of the U. S. Geological Survey: Allentown, Delaware Water Gap, Easton, Mauch Chunk, Slatington and Wind Gap.

The geologic history of Northampton County, as read in the rocks themselves and the topographic forms that have been carved from these thick and varied lithologic masses, is a long and complicated one. In part it has been deciphered but in large measure the final, and hence the correct, interpretations will probably not be reached until far more information is available.

More than a billion years of history is involved in the geologic story of Northampton County. During this long period of time, the region has been in preparation for Man, the only animal that has ever possessed the ability to utilize, except in a small way, the products of Nature’s factories or to bring partially under his control the dynamic forces of the Universe. The long geologic record is one of alternating periods of construction, modification and destruction. Seas, plains and mountains in turn have occupied these regions; forces so gigantic that Man’s greatest efforts seem puerile in comparison, have uplifted, depressed and folded the rocks as though they were thin pieces of paper. More than 100,000 cubic miles of water has fallen from the skies in the form of rain and snow since the last emergence from beneath oceanic waters, and the resultant streams have carried from the region such masses of rock that if all were replaced the region would contain mountains outrivaling the Himalayas.

The human history in comparison with the geologic is extremely brief. The Indians probably occupied the region a few hundred years before the white man came but he rarely interfered with or modified the forces of Nature. The white men from Europe, from their first arrival, have been altering the surface topography and in countless ways have either aided or impeded the natural forces of destruction and construction. The products that required millions of years for their formation have been used in various manufactured articles. The rocks, the soils and the ores of the region have been put to use and, in