Snowfall

The snowfall records have been included in the precipitation data, but it is well to discuss the snowfalls of the region separately. The data on snow are less abundant and less accurate than on other topics. There is enough, however, to warrant one in saying positively that there has been no marked change, in spite of the equally positive statements of many of the older inhabitants to the effect that in their youth there was much more snow than in recent years. Certainly snows of the period before hard roads, automobiles, and State supervision resulted in more inconvenience and also were utilized for sleighing to a far greater degree than at present when sleighs have practically disappeared. The greatest importance of snow is the protection which it affords the winter wheat and other plants.

There is great variation in the snowfall both as to amount and to time of occurrence. The months of greatest fall are December, January and February, although occasional heavy falls occur during November and March. In most sections the heaviest single snow on record occurred on March 10-12, 1888, when a depth between twenty and thirty inches was measured in some places. Even during April and October snow occasionally covers the ground for a short time and snow flurries occur during May and September. A very late snow in the spring is commonly termed the “onion snow.”

Figures of annual snowfall measured at Allentown for twelve years, Bethlehem for twenty years and Easton for seven years give an average annual snowfall of 23.81 inches for Allentown, 27.50 inches for Bethlehem and 27.07 inches for Easton. This is evidently too low as a general average as it includes several years of abnormally light snows. A fairer average would be near 30 inches. Philadelphia over a period of 58 years has an average of 24.3 inches. The average seasonal snowfall for Reading is 29.5 inches. As it is a common occurrence in winter to have a storm passing through eastern Pennsylvania yield rain in Philadelphia and snow in the Lehigh Valley the snowfall for this region over a longer term of years should be considerably higher than Philadelphia and slightly higher than Reading.