The most casual observer crossing Northampton County from north to south notes differences in the topographic features, whereas a person traversing the county in a west-east direction notes few changes. It is the function of the geologist (geomorphologist) to differentiate, classify, name and explain these resemblances and differences. Numerous investigators have studied these forms in Northampton County or in other parts of the Appalachians. Because of the wide extent of each physiographic type represented in the region, studies made in somewhat distant sections are pertinent to this discussion.

There is general agreement regarding the main features but not in the minor divisions and in the nomenclature. The classification of Fenneman, adopted by the U. S. Geological Survey, is mainly followed in this report.

According to this usage, Northampton County constitutes a small portion of the Appalachian Highlands which extends from Canada to central Alabama and from the Coastal Plain on the east to the Interior Plains on the west. This is divided into provinces and these in turn into sections. Northampton County contains portions of the following divisions.


Figure 28. Physiographic subdivisions of Pennsylvania.

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