INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

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The Lehigh Valley at the present time is generally rated as primarily an industrial region. The industries are varied and valuable. Into the region are continually coming raw products and minor manufactures from the far ends of the earth and from it are going other manufactured articles to various parts of this country and to foreign countries far and near.

The importance of the present topography and geology can scarcely be exaggerated, and numerous illustrations of their relation to our many thriving industries of today could be cited. The great thickness of limestones and shales has resulted in the open valley where agricultural pursuits can be carried on. The valley of the Lehigh made possible the building of the Lehigh Canal and facilitated the construction of the major railroad lines. The gaps in the mountains cut by the streams are more numerous than in some sections and have aided in the construction of highways. Although other factors than topography determine the location of cities and villages, it is readily recognized that comparatively flat land, such as prevails in most portions of the lower Lehigh Valley, has had a marked influence in the location and growth of the settlements and the establishment of many of the existing industries.

The climate, soils and water resources are all important factors in the industrial development of any region and have been discussed elsewhere in this volume.

Man-Made Advantages of the Region

Before discussing the different industries, we may point out the common man-made advantages of the region. The main advantages are summarized as follows:

Proximity of markets.—With a population of approximately 500,000 within the Lehigh Valley and more than 17,000,000 within 100 miles of Bethlehem and 26,000,000 within 200 miles, a distance that a truck can easily go in a day, the strategic location of the Lehigh Valley for markets is apparent.

Transportation.—Road building received attention at a very early date. Dirt roads prevailed during the early years of settlement and were almost impassable during certain seasons, yet they facilitated exchange of products. The next stage was the building of privately owned hard-surfaced cobblestone turnpikes with their familiar toll