As transportation facilities improved, iron ore of higher grade and more uniform quality came into the region from northern New Jersey, eastern New York and Michigan. The local mines could not compete and gradually one after another closed until all are now abandoned. Most of the furnaces continued to operate on imported ores for a while but they too got into difficulty and one after another they disappeared. The immense piles of slag through the region, some of which is now being used as road ballast and for concrete, bear witness to the former wide distribution of the iron industry.

The Bethlehem Steel Co. is the outgrowth of a small iron company such as many others that formerly dotted the section. The original company was the Saecon Iron Co., incorporated in 1857. The charter of the present company dates from 1904. Its growth in the past 30 years was rapid and steady until the present depression. It is the largest industrial plant in the Lehigh Valley and its importance to the community and the country at large can scarcely be over-emphasized. The products emanating from this establishment are marketed over the entire world. During the World War the company was almost entirely engaged in the manufacture of war materials and at all times it has furnished the U. S. Government with many products. To enumerate its present products is not desirable but it may be well to call attention to some of the leading products such as structural steel, various alloys, merchant bars, forgings and castings, tool steel, and machine products.

Giving employment to thousands of men and using annually 1,250,000 tons of coal and large quantities of electrical power, one can well appreciate its outstanding importance in the Lehigh Valley.

The region also contains a variety of manufactures in which iron and steel play a large part. The Treadwell Engineering Co. of Easton manufactures cars for hot metal and cinders and heavy steel plant machinery; the Pennsylvania Pump and Compressor Co. of Easton manufactures a long line of compressors, pumps and condensers; the Bethlehem Foundry and Machine Co. of Bethlehem manufactures machines used in the cement, chemical and metallurgical industries; and many others.

At times other metal concerns have been active in the county but have passed out of existence with changes in the industrial life of the Nation or have gone into other lines of manufacture.

Limestones.—As described on earlier pages, Northampton County is bountifully supplied with limestones. Although formerly quarried in scores of places for lime, flux, crushed stone and building stone, only a few operations of any considerable size have been developed. The abundance and wide distribution of limestone account partly for this situation.