

Huntington County Historical Overview

Huntington County, Indiana was organized on December 2, 1834. It was originally part of The Adams New Purchase of 1827 which evolved from The Delaware New Purchase. Indiana Counties developed from these land claims include the modern day counties of Adams, Clinton, Grant, Huntington, Jay, Wells, and portions of Boone, Carroll, Tipton and Wabash. Several of these counties maintain mutual commercial and cultural relationships today.

Huntington County is named in recognition of Samuel Huntington, of Connecticut, a signer of The Declaration of Independence, who also served as President of the Continental Congress under The Articles of Confederation. Huntington County has an area of 384 square miles (24 miles north-to-south by 16 miles east-to-west) and twelve townships; Clear Creek, Dallas, Huntington, Jackson, Jefferson, Lancaster, Polk, Rock Creek, Salamonie, Union, Warren, and Wayne. The principle communities in the County are Andrews, Bippus, Huntington, Markle, Mount Etna, Roanoke, and Warren.

The Miami Indians were the first known inhabitants of the area, recognizing its strategic importance as a transportation route for commerce and military activities. The Little River joins the Wabash River in Huntington County forming the area known as the Forks of the Wabash. The land associated with “The Forks” was very significant to Tribal activities and served as a Treaty Grounds as well as a center of commerce.

The larger region of Northeast Indiana and Northwest Ohio was heavily influenced by the history of the Northwest Territory of the Great Lakes and the military struggles which ultimately resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Greenville after U.S. General “Mad” Anthony Wayne defeated Chief Little Turtle of the Miami Nation at the Battle of Fallen Timbers.

The Miami had discovered a short portage near present day Fort Wayne, which allowed a convenient connection between the Great Lakes (via the Maumee River) and the Mississippi River basin (via the Wabash and Ohio Rivers). Only the short portage at Fort Wayne interrupted an otherwise seamless water route connecting the upper Great Lakes with New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. Chief Francis LaFontaine became the Miami Chief after Chief Richardville. La Fontaine built a trading-house and residence adjacent to the Forks of the Wabash. The site still exists today and is maintained by the Historic Forks of the Wabash Foundation.

The County grew economically and in population with the construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal during the 1830s. Later, the Canal was replaced by the Railroads, resulting in another growth “spurt” in Huntington County. The present day highway U.S. 24 follows this original corridor.

The City of Huntington grew from the consolidation of the smaller communities of Drovertown, Ubee, and Huntington itself. The community earned the nickname “The Lime City” as a result of the natural limestone deposits beneath the surface soil in the area. Indeed several gravel pits, stone quarries and other mining interests are found in Huntington County.

The Civil War era put Huntington in the national spotlight with the trial of Huntington native Lambdin P. Milligan and the eventual U.S. Supreme Court Case ExParte-Milligan. This case determined that U.S. civilians could not be tried in a military court as long as the civil court system was functioning.

Huntington again hit the national spotlight in 1988 when Huntington native United States Senator Dan Quayle was selected by George H.W. Bush to serve as his running mate. Quayle served as the 44th Vice President of the United States. He joined four other Hoosiers who previously served in that capacity, Schuyler Colfax, Charles W. Fairbanks, Thomas Hendricks, and Thomas Riley Marshall. Interestingly, all five of Indiana's Vice Presidents all came from hometowns along the Indiana Highway 9 corridor, earning the route the designation as "The Highway of Vice Presidents."

The economic developments of the other communities of Huntington County also share a rich heritage. The development of Andrews was heavily influenced as the railroad industry grew in Huntington County. Once referred to as Antioch, the Town is served by the Norfolk-Southern Railroad today. On the banks of the Wabash River, Andrews lies on the Hoosier Heartland Industrial Corridor of U.S. Highway 24, connecting Toledo, Ohio, Fort Wayne and Lafayette, Indiana. The Salamonie Reservoir State Recreation Area and Salamonie Dam are nearby.

The claim to fame of small town Bippus, in the northwest corner of Huntington County on Indiana State Road 105, is as the hometown of the late ABC Sports Broadcast Legend Chris Schenkel. Schenkel was best known for his work on ABC's Wide World of Sports, Pro-Bowlers Tour coverage, and the ABC coverage of the Olympic Games.

Also on the banks of the Wabash River on the eastern side of the County, Markle lies at the intersection of U.S. 224 and Interstate 69. Markle is home to a variety of manufacturing concerns including Novae Corporation, Wayne Metals, ALH Building Systems, and Dayton Freight to name a few. The U.S. 224 Industrial Park offers prime manufacturing sites right on I-69 at exit 86.

Roanoke, Indiana, is situated in the northeastern part of the county, owing its origin to the canal and the railroad, as well as the eventual construction of U.S. Highway 24. The canal included locks at Roanoke. During its canal days, waterpower was abundant. Gristmills and later steam mills for flour milling developed. Woodworking establishments followed as the town grew. Today Roanoke's downtown is a regional model for downtown revitalization, spurred by the headquarters of American Specialty Insurance. Roanoke is conveniently served by I-69 at Exit 86.

The Town of Warren developed on the banks of the Salamonie River in the southeastern section of the County. Served by two exits off I-69 (Exit 73 & Exit 78) Warren proudly announces that it is “three miles on your way” as you travel I-69. The development of the Town was heavily influenced by the history of Indiana’s petroleum industry. The historic Trenton Oil Field lies just south of the community. Numerous small towns in the region grew as the petroleum industry flourished as area wells produced a wealth of natural gas and crude oil. According to the Geologist of the State of Indiana, wells around Warren produced nearly 4,041 barrels of crude per day in 1897. Warren also hosts the museum collection in honor of The U.S.S. Salamonie, AO-26, Cimarron Class Fleet Oiler from World War II. Warren is also the location of The United Methodist Memorial Home.

Famous people originally from Huntington County include, U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle, Purdue University Basketball Star Chris Kramer, Indiana University Basketball Star Sean Cline, former U.S. Congressman J. Edward Roush, and ABC Sport Broadcaster Chris Schenkel.

Huntington County’s population approaches 38,000 people today.

Compiled and edited in 2008 by Mark Wickersham, Executive Director of HCUED.
