Blackford County , Indiana

Blackford County is located in the east central portion of the U.S. state of Indiana . The county is named for Judge Isaac Blackford , who was the first speaker of the Indiana General Assembly and a long @-@ time chief justice of the Indiana Supreme Court . Created in 1838 , Blackford County is divided into four townships , and its county seat is Hartford City . Two incorporated cities and one incorporated town are located within the county . The county is also the site of numerous unincorporated communities and ghost towns . Occupying only 165 @.@ 58 square miles (428 @.@ 9 km2) , Blackford County is the fourth smallest county in Indiana . As of the 2010 census , the county 's population is 12 @,@ 766 people in 5 @,@ 236 households . Based on population , the county is the 8th smallest county of the 92 in Indiana . Although no interstate highways are located in Blackford County , three Indiana state roads cross the county , and an additional state road is located along the county 's southeast border . The county has two railroad lines . A north ? south route crosses the county , and intersects with a second railroad line that connects Hartford City with communities to the west .

Before the arrival of European @-@ American settlers during the 1830s , the northeastern portion of the future Blackford County was briefly the site of an Indian reservation for Chief Francois Godfroy of the Miami tribe . The first European @-@ American pioneers were typically farmers that settled near rivers where the land had drainage suitable for agriculture . Originally , the county was mostly swampland , but more land became available for farming as the marshes were cleared and drained . Over the next 30 years , small communities slowly developed throughout the county . When the county 's rail lines were constructed in the 1860s and 1870s , additional communities evolved around railroad stops .

Beginning in the late 1880s , the discovery of natural gas and crude oil in the county (and surrounding region) caused the area to undergo an economic boom period known as the Indiana Gas Boom . Manufacturers relocated to the area to take advantage of the low @-@ cost energy and railroad facilities . The boom period lasted about 15 years , and is reflected in Blackford County 's population , which peaked in 1900 at 17 @,@ 213 . The new construction associated with the additional prosperity of the boom period caused a significant upgrade in the county 's appearance , as wooden buildings were replaced with structures made with brick and stone . Much of the infrastructure built during that time remains today ? including Montpelier 's historic Carnegie Library and many of Hartford City 's buildings in the Courthouse Square Historic District .

Agriculture continues to be important to the county , and became even more important after the loss of several large manufacturers during the 20th century . Today , 72 percent of Blackford County is covered by either corn or soybean fields ; additional crops , such as wheat and hay , are also grown .

Geography

According to the 2010 census , Blackford County has a total area of 165 @.@ 58 square miles (428 @.@ 9 km2) , of which 165 @.@ 08 square miles (427 @.@ 6 km2) (or 99 @.@ 70 %) is land and 0 @.@ 50 square miles (1 @.@ 3 km2) (or 0 @.@ 30 %) is water , making it the fourth smallest county in the state . The county is located in East Central Indiana , about 55 miles (89 km) south of Fort Wayne , Indiana , and about 78 miles (126 km) northeast of Indianapolis . Along the north side of the county is Wells County , and on the eastern side of the county is Jay County , which separates Blackford County from Indiana 's border with the state of Ohio . Delaware County is located on Blackford County 's southern border , and to the west is Grant County .

The county land was flattened by two glaciers millions of years ago . These glaciers are also responsible for the rich Blackford County farmland that became available after the county was cleared and drained . During the early 20th century , the Renner Stock Farm , in Licking Township , was known statewide for its quality cattle , hogs , and horses .

The county has some small streams and lakes , although the lakes are man @-@ made . The Salamonie River , flowing out of Jay County (Indiana) from the east , crosses the northeast corner

of Blackford County . Big and Little Lick Creek flow westward in Licking and Jackson townships in the southern half of the county . Early settlers were attracted to Lick Creek , and then the Salamonie River , because the nearby land had suitable drainage for farming . The county 's lakes include Lake Blue Water in Harrison Township ; Cain 's Lake , Shamrock Lakes and Lake Mohee in Licking Township ; and Lake Placid in Jackson Township . Lake Blue Water is a spring @-@ fed former stone quarry located one mile (1 @.@ 6 km) east of Montpelier . The Shamrock Lakes (a group of six lakes) were created between 1960 and 1965 , and the first lake was originally intended to be a water supply for a farmer 's cattle .

Licking and Harrison townships were original to the county . Washington Township , which is named after President George Washington , was created June 29 , 1839 , by the county commissioners . Jackson Township , which is thought to be named after President Andrew Jackson , was created by the commissioners on September 22 , 1839 .

= = = Communities = = =

Two incorporated cities are located within the county , and a small portion of a third city occupies the county 's southeast corner . The largest city is county seat Hartford City , located in the southern half of the county . Hartford City 's population in 2010 was 6 @,@ 220 ? well below its 1970 peak of 8 @,@ 207 . Another incorporated city is Montpelier , which is located on the southern banks of the Salamonie River in the northeastern part of the county . Montpelier 's 2010 population was 1 @,@ 805 , which is below its Census Bureau peak of 3 @,@ 405 achieved in 1900 ? and less than one half of an unofficial peak of 5 @,@ 000 estimated during the city 's oil boom in 1895 . A small portion of the city of Dunkirk , known as Shadyside , is located in the Jackson Township portion of Blackford County , but most of Dunkirk is located in Jay County . The population for the entire city of Dunkirk was 2 @,@ 362 in 2010 . Shamrock Lakes is Blackford County 's only incorporated town , achieving that status on May 21 , 1973 ? and was the first community in Indiana to do so in 50 years . Its 2010 population was 231 .

Road maps typically show five unincorporated communities in Blackford County : Converse (formerly named Crumley 's Crossing) , Matamoras , Millgrove , Roll (formerly named Dundee) , and Trenton (former post office named Priam) . These communities are sometimes listed as ghost towns , as nearly all businesses in these communities have closed . However , residences are still maintained in these communities , and they are listed as populated places by the U.S. Geological Survey . Millgrove , Roll , and Trenton all had post offices during the 19th or 20th centuries .

= = = = Extinct settlements = = = =

Blackford County has over 10 communities that do not exist anymore . In some cases , a church , farm or single residence remains at the extinct community 's location . Among these former communities , Bowser Station , Dorsey Station , Mollie , Silas , and Slocum all had post offices during the 19th century . Mollie 's post office lasted until 1907 .

Bowser Station ? This community was a railroad stop in southern Licking Township , and had a post office during the 1870s .

Dorsey Station ? This Harrison Township community was a railroad stop , and had a post office during the 1870s .

Frog Alley ? This Washington Township community had a church and school . The name Frog Alley was bestowed on the community because of the swampy condition of the area . The school , which began in 1863 , lasted until 1923 .

Greenland ? Located in Harrison Township at 400 North and 600 East .

Little Chicago ? Located in northwest corner of Harrison Township , and in Wells County .

Mollie ? This community thrived in the 1890s as a railroad stop with a grain elevator , post office , and general store . The Harrison Township oil fields were located nearby .

Pleasantdale ? Located in Harrison Township , at 300 North and 600 East .

Renner ? This Licking Township community was a railroad stop next to the Renner Stock Farm .

Housing for the farm 's employees was also located there . It thrived from the 1890s until the 1920s . Renner is still listed as a populated place by the U.S. Geological Survey , but its " population " is a farm .

 Silas ? The Washington Township land that became the community of Silas was purchased in 1848 , and the original owner established a church and school . By 1880 , a general store was established at that location , and its owner was community namesake Silas Rayl . During the first decade of the 20th century , the Silas general store closed , contributing to the demise of the community .

 Slocum ? This community was located in southeastern Harrison Township (exact location not known) , and had a post office from 1886 until 1902 .

 The Town of Luck ? Located in Harrison Township at 250 North and 800 East .

 Winterhurst ? Located in Licking Township , at 200 South and 0 @.@ 5 miles (0 @.@ 80 km) East .

= = History = =

 Following thousands of years of varying cultures of indigenous peoples , the historic Miami and Delaware Indians (a.k.a. Lenape) are the first @-@ recorded permanent settlers in the Blackford County area , living on the Godfroy Reserve after an 1818 treaty . The site is located in Blackford County 's Harrison Township , east of Montpelier . Although the Godfroy Reserve was allotted to Miami Indian Chief Francois (a.k.a. Francis) Godfroy , Delaware Indians were also allowed to stay there . The Miami tribe was the most powerful group of Indians in the region , and Francois Godfroy (who was half French) was one of their chiefs . By 1839 , Godfroy had sold the reserve , and the Indians had migrated west . Benjamin Reasoner was the first European ? American to enter future Blackford County , and its first land owner . He entered what would become Licking Township on July 9 , 1831 . Reasoner and his sons built the county 's first mill , which was located on the family farm .

 For a brief period , the land that would become Blackford County was the western part of Jay County . An act of the Indiana General Assembly , which was approved January 30 , 1836 , created Jay County effective after March 1 , 1836 . In December 1836 , a motion was made in the Indiana House of Representatives to review dividing Jay County , but that resolution was not adopted . Two Blackford County communities , Matamoras and Montpelier , originally existed as part of Jay County . Both of these communities are located along the Salamonie River in what became the northeast portion of Blackford County . John Blount founded Matamoras , arriving in 1833 . This village is Blackford County 's oldest community , and is the site of the county 's largest water mill . The mill , constructed around 1843 , was considered one of the finest in the state . Blackford County 's other former Jay County community is Montpelier , which is located west of Matamoras on the Salamonie River . Led by Abel Baldwin , the community was started in 1836 by groups of migrant settlers from Vermont . The Vermont natives named the settlement after the capital of their home state , Montpelier . Blackford County 's Montpelier was platted in 1837 (before Matamoras) , and is the county 's oldest platted community .

 Several sources claim Blackford County was created in 1837 . However , the law was not finalized until 1838 . Indiana bill of the House No. 152 was originally for the creation of a county named Windsor . The name " Windsor " was replaced with the name " Blackford " by the House of Representatives in January 1838 . An " act for the formation of the county of Blackford " was approved on February 15 , 1838 . This act intended that the county would be " open for business " on the first Monday in April , 1838 , which was April 2 . However , the county was not organized . Finally , on January 29 , 1839 , the original February 15 act was amended , stating that Blackford County shall " enjoy the rights and privileges " of an independent county . The act also appointed commissioners , and corrected a misprint that defined the southeast corner of the new county .

 Over the next two years , a political " battle " continued over the location of the county seat . The tiny community of Hartford was repeatedly selected by the commissioners , but those decisions were challenged by individuals favoring Montpelier . While Licking Township (location of community of Hartford) was the most populous township in the county , the community of Montpelier was the

county 's oldest platted community . After a third and fourth act of the Indiana General Assembly , Hartford was finalized as the location of the county seat ? and construction of a courthouse began . Because it was discovered that another community in Indiana was also named Hartford , Blackford County 's Hartford was eventually renamed Hartford City .

During the next 25 years , the county grew slowly . Plans were made for roads and railroads , and swampland was drained . The first railroad line was authorized in 1849 . The plan was for the Fort Wayne & Southern Railroad Company to connect the Indiana cities of Fort Wayne and Muncie ? running north ? south through the Blackford County communities of Montpelier and Hartford City . Although work constructing the railroad line began in the 1850s , it was not completed (by connecting Fort Wayne to Muncie) until 1870 , and this delay caused it to be the second railroad to operate in Blackford County . By the time the railroad began operations , it was named Fort Wayne , Cincinnati & Louisville Railroad . The Lake Erie and Western Railroad acquired this railroad in 1890 .

The first railroad to operate in Blackford County crossed somewhat east ? west through the county 's southern half . The railroad was named Union and Logansport Railroad Company by the time it entered Blackford County . This line was proposed in 1862 , and completed to Hartford City in 1867 ? running through the Blackford County communities of Dunkirk , Crumley 's Crossing , and Hartford City . The small community of Crumley 's Crossing was renamed Converse , and two other communities (Millgrove and Renner) became established on this line . The railroad was eventually named Pittsburgh , Cincinnati and St. Louis Railroad . Other names for the railroad since that time include the Panhandle division of the Pennsylvania Railroad , Penn Central Railroad Company , Conrail , and Norfolk Southern Railway . A portion of this line is now abandoned , and the track has been removed between Converse and Hartford City , south of State Road 26 .

= = = Gas boom = = =

In 1886 , natural gas was discovered in two counties adjacent to Blackford County . The discoveries were in the small community of Eaton (south of Hartford City along railroad line) in Delaware County , and in the city of Portland in Jay County (east of Hartford City and Millgrove) . The Hartford City Gas & Oil Company was formed in early 1887 , and successfully drilled a natural gas well later in the year . In Montpelier , the Montpelier Gas & Oil Mining company was organized in the spring of 1887 . While natural gas was found throughout Blackford County , crude oil was found mostly in the county 's Harrison Township (somewhat between Montpelier and Mollie) . Blackford County 's first successful oil well , located just south of Montpelier , began producing during 1890 . Montpelier was thought to be " the very heart of the greatest natural gas and oil field in the world " . Oil was also found in parts of Washington Township , including a well that was thought to be " the most phenomenal well ever drilled in America " . By 1896 , Blackford County had 18 natural gas companies . These companies were headquartered in all four of the county 's townships , including the communities of Hartford City , Montpelier , Roll , Dunkirk , Trenton (Priam Post Office) , and Millgrove .

In June 1880 , only 171 people held manufacturing jobs in Blackford County . The Indiana Gas Boom transformed the region , as manufacturers moved to the area to utilize the natural gas and railroad system . During 1901 , Indiana state inspectors visited 21 manufacturing facilities in Blackford County , and these companies employed 1 @,@ 346 people (compare to 171 two decades earlier) . Since these inspections were in Hartford City and Montpelier only , additional manufacturing employees from the county 's small communities (such as Millgrove 's glass factory) could be added to the count of 1 @,@ 346 . The county 's two largest employers were glass factories : American Window Glass plant number 3 and Sneath Glass Company . Hartford City 's resources (low cost energy , two railroads , and workforce) were especially favored by glass factories , and a 1904 directory lists 10 of them .

In addition to an economic transformation , another byproduct of the gas boom was an upgrade of Blackford County 's appearance . Many of the county 's landmark buildings were constructed during the gas boom , including the current courthouse and surrounding buildings in Hartford City 's

Courthouse Square Historic District . The city 's waterworks was also built during that period . Additional buildings include the Carnegie Library and historic Presbyterian Church . In Montpelier , many of the buildings in its Downtown Historic District were also constructed during the gas boom . Montpelier 's historic Baptist Church and Montpelier 's Carnegie Library were constructed in the early 1900s ? near the end of the gas boom .

= = = Post @-@ gas boom = = =

The Indiana Gas Boom gradually came to an end during the first decade of the 20th century . The end of the gas boom meant less prosperity for the county . The gas and oil workers left , some of the manufacturers moved , and the service industries were forced to close or cut back operations because of fewer customers . Adding to the county 's problems , machines made the labor ? intensive method originally used for producing window glass obsolete , causing many of the county 's skilled glass workers at the large American Window Glass plant to lose their jobs . By 1932 , the window glass plant of the county 's former largest employer was closed . According to the United States Census , Blackford County 's population peaked at 17 @,@ 123 in 1900 , and it still has not returned to that zenith over 100 years later .

The end of the gas boom was especially difficult for the smaller communities in the county , since the loss of a single business had more of an impact on undersized communities than it did for a town with many businesses . In the case of Millgrove , the community 's major manufacturer (a glass factory) closed . For other communities , such as Mollie , the loss of the gas and oil workers meant that the local post office was a " waste of time " , and consumer demand at the general store was significantly diminished .

Improvements to the automobile and highways , which coincided with the end of the gas boom , may have also contributed to the decline of the county 's smaller communities . The automobile changed " business and shopping patterns at the expense of the small @-@ town merchant . " Small town residents began to drive to larger communities to purchase goods , because of the wider selection . The improved quality of automobiles and roads competed with passenger service on the railroads (and interurban lines) , causing a decline in passenger traffic on the rails . Small towns associated with railroad stations suffered from the loss in traffic . In Blackford County , passenger service on the Lake Erie and Western Railroad line (owned by the Nickel Plate Road by that time) was discontinued in 1931 , and the last interurban train ran on January 18 , 1941 .

Although the natural gas and oil workers left the area after the gas (and oil) boom , Montpelier 's population eventually stabilized ? and Hartford City 's grew . Some of the manufacturers remained in the county 's two largest cities because of a lack of better alternatives . Hartford City 's Sneath Glass Company , a major employer , continued operations until the 1950s . Hartford City leaders attracted businesses such as Overhead Door (1923) and 3M (1955) to replace some of the companies that left the area . Overhead Door was a major employer in Hartford City for over 60 years . A major setback for the community involving Overhead Door occurred during the 1980s , although it began in the 1960s . During the 1960s , Overhead Door moved its headquarters from Hartford City to Dallas , Texas . Its Hartford City manufacturing plant continued to be a major employer until the 1980s , when Overhead Door cut back local operations . The Hartford City facility finally closed in 2000 . The county lost another major Hartford City employer in 2011 when the Key Plastics plant closed , as 200 people lost their jobs .

Agriculture continues to be an important factor in the county 's economy . Over 70 percent of Blackford County 's land is occupied by soybean or corn fields . Additional crops and livestock are also raised . Good returns in agriculture are not always reflected in the economy of nearby towns , as industrial agriculture has reduced the number of workers it needs , and family farms have declined . Many small towns in the " Corn Belt " , such as the communities in Blackford County , continue to decline in size and affluence .

= = Demographics = =

As of the 2010 United States Census , Blackford County 's population density was 77 @.@ 3 inhabitants per square mile (29 @.@ 8 / km2) , well below the average for Indiana , which was 180 @.@ 8 inhabitants per square mile (69 @.@ 8 / km2) . Blackford County had 12 @,@ 766 people , 5 @,@ 236 households , and 3 @,@ 567 families residing within its borders . The racial makeup of the county was 97 @.@ 7 percent white , 0 @.@ 4 percent black or African American , 0 @.@ 2 percent Native American , 0 @.@ 1 percent Asian , 0 @.@ 3 percent from other races , and 1 @.@ 3 percent from two or more races . Those of Hispanic or Latino origin made up 0 @.@ 9 percent of the population .

The average household size was 2 @.@ 41 , and the average family size was 2 @.@ 88 . Families accounted for 68 @.@ 1 percent of the county 's 5 @,@ 236 households , and 75 @.@ 5 percent of these families included a husband and wife living together . Children under the age of 18 were living in 38 @.@ 9 percent of the family households . Non @-@ family households accounted for 31 @.@ 9 percent of total households , and 86 @.@ 8 percent of them were occupied by someone living alone . People 65 years and older , living alone , accounted for 40 @.@ 1 percent of non @-@ family households ? or 12 @.@ 8 percent of all types of households .

In terms of age distribution , 22 @.@ 8 percent of the population were under the age of 18 , and 21 @.@ 6 percent were 62 years of age or older . The median age was 42 @.@ 4 years . For every 100 females , there were 97 @.@ 2 males . For every 100 females age 18 and over , there were 93 @.@ 7 males .

As of the 2000 United States Census , the median income for a household in the county was $ 34 @,@ 760 , and the median income for a family was $ 41 @,@ 758 . Males had a median income of $ 30 @,@ 172 versus $ 21 @,@ 386 for females . The per capita income for the county was $ 16 @,@ 543 . About 6 @.@ 0 percent of families and 8 @.@ 7 percent of the population were below the poverty line , including 12 @.@ 3 percent of those under age 18 and 8 @.@ 6 percent of those age 65 or over . In terms of ancestry , 16 @.@ 7 percent were German , 15 @.@ 5 percent were American , 9 @.@ 3 percent were Irish and 7 @.@ 8 percent were English .

= = Government = =

The county government is a constitutional body granted specific powers by the Constitution of Indiana and the Indiana Code . The county council is the legislative branch of the county government and controls all spending and revenue collection . Representatives are elected from county districts . The council members serve four @-@ year terms and are responsible for setting salaries , the annual budget and special spending . The council also has limited authority to impose local taxes , in the form of an income and property tax that is subject to state level approval , excise taxes and service taxes . In 2010 , the county budgeted approximately $ 3 @.@ 95 million for the district 's schools and $ 3 @.@ 18 million for other county operations and services , for a total annual budget of approximately $ 7 @.@ 1 million .

The executive body of the county is made of a board of commissioners . The commissioners are elected county @-@ wide , in staggered terms , and each serves a four @-@ year term . One of the commissioners , typically the most senior , serves as president . The commissioners are charged with executing the acts legislated by the council , collecting revenue and managing day @-@ to @-@ day functions of the county government . The 2011 president of Blackford County 's board of commissioners is Fred Walker .

The county maintains a small claims court that can handle some civil cases . The judge on the court is elected to a term of four years and must be a member of the Indiana Bar Association . The judge is assisted by a constable who is elected to a four @-@ year term . In some cases , court decisions can be appealed to the state level circuit court .

The county has several other elected offices , including sheriff , coroner , auditor , treasurer , recorder , surveyor and circuit court clerk . Each of these elected officers serves a term of four years and oversees a different part of county government . Members elected to county government positions are required to declare party affiliations and be residents of the county .

Each of the townships has a trustee who administers rural fire protection and ambulance service ,

provides poor relief and manages cemetery care , among other duties . The trustee is assisted in these duties by a three @-@ member township board . The trustees and board members are elected to four @-@ year terms .

 Based on 2000 census results , Blackford County is part of Indiana 's 6th congressional district , Indiana Senate district 19 and Indiana House of Representatives district 31 .

= = Climate and weather = =

 Blackford County has a typical Midwestern humid continental seasonal climate , and its Köppen climate classification is Dfa . There are four distinct seasons , with winters being cold with moderate snowfall , while summers can be warm and humid . In recent years , average temperatures in county seat Hartford City have ranged from a low of 18 ° F (? 8 ° C) in January to a high of 84 ° F (29 ° C) in July , although a record low of ? 26 ° F (? 32 ° C) was recorded in January 1994 and a record high of 103 ° F (39 ° C) was recorded in June 1988 . Average monthly precipitation ranged from 1 @.@ 94 inches (49 mm) in February to 4 @.@ 33 inches (110 mm) in June .

 March and April are considered tornado season in Indiana . Blackford County endured a category 4 storm on Palm Sunday (April 11) in 1965 . This storm was one of many tornados that occurred in the Midwest on that day . Category 4 tornados have maximum speeds of 207 to 260 miles per hour (333 to 418 km / h) , and this one crossed Blackford County farmland east of Roll . Although there were no fatalities in Blackford County from this tornado , two people were killed in neighboring Wells County . The county has experienced at least five other tornados . The most recent tornados were two that occurred in Hartford City in 2002 . However , the two Hartford City tornados were rated category 1 on the Fujita scale ? much less dangerous than a category 4 .

 Blackford County has a record for hail . Hail 4 @.@ 5 inches (110 mm) in diameter fell in Hartford City on April 9 , 2001 . In a tie with the city of Cayuga , those hail " stones " are the largest ever recorded in the state of Indiana .

 The biggest recorded snow storm was the Great Blizzard of 1978 , which occurred on January 26 ? 27 , 1978 . A federal state of emergency was declared for Indiana at that time . Indiana governor Otis R. Bowen authorized the use of National Guard equipment , facilities , and personnel throughout the state . Low temperatures , high winds , and deep snow caused Hartford City to look like a ghost town , as schools and businesses closed . Wind gusts up to 45 miles per hour (72 km / h) caused snowdrifts up to 5 feet (1 @.@ 5 m) high , making travel by any type of truck or automobile almost impossible . Snowmobiles were the only viable means of transportation , and volunteers from Hartford City 's Snowmobile Club provided emergency assistance .

= = Economy = =

 Blackford County 's economy is supported by a labor force of approximately 5 @,@ 900 workers with an unemployment rate for June 2013 of 9 @.@ 8 percent . Industrial parks are located in both Montpelier and Hartford City , and both cities are served by railroad line owned by Norfolk Southern . Over 30 employers of varying size are located in the county . The Blackford County School System has the most employees , with locations in both Hartford City and Montpelier . 3M Company is currently the largest manufacturer in the county , and has been located in Hartford City since its purchase of the Hartford City Paper Mill in 1955 . Another business employing more than 100 people is Blackford County Community Hospital , located in Hartford City . Emhart Gripco is Montpelier 's leading employer , with over 100 people working at its facility .

 Four categories of employment account for over 50 percent of employment in the county : manufacturing , government , retail trade , and health care . The largest category is manufacturing , and it accounts for about 19 percent of the county 's employed workforce . In addition to local Blackford County businesses , larger local economies in the more populous counties to the south and west offer employment and commerce , particularly in the city of Muncie in Delaware County , and the city of Marion in Grant County . Both counties employ more workers than their local workforce can provide .

Agriculture has a significant impact on the county , although farm workers account for only about 5 percent of the county 's workers . In 2007 , the county had 250 farms occupying 84 @,@ 626 acres (34 @,@ 247 ha) . Therefore , roughly 80 percent of Blackford County is farmland . Nearly 72 @,@ 000 acres (29 @,@ 000 ha) are devoted to the cultivation of soybeans and corn . Wheat , hay , and oats were also grown . Livestock include over 24 @,@ 000 hogs and pigs .

= = Transportation = =

There are no interstate highways in Blackford County , although Interstate 69 passes about 5 miles (8 @.@ 0 km) to the west of the county 's western border . U.S. Route 35 shares a portion of I @-@ 69 's route in this area ; it also does not enter Blackford County .
State Road 3 enters the county from the south after passing through Eaton in neighboring Delaware County . It passes directly north through Hartford City and leaves the county near Roll , continuing north into Wells County . State Road 18 runs from west to east through the north end of the county , on its way from Marion to the Ohio border ; it passes through Montpelier and Matamoras .
State Road 26 also runs from west to east , entering from Upland in neighboring Grant County and passing through Hartford City where it crosses State Road 3 . Going on through Trenton , it enters Jay County on its way to the Ohio border .
State Road 167 runs along the eastern border of the county for about 5 miles (8 @.@ 0 km) as it goes north from Dunkirk ; it terminates when it reaches State Road 26 .
A Norfolk Southern Railway railroad line enters the county from the south after leaving Eaton ; it runs about a mile to the east of State Road 3 until it reaches Hartford City where it veers to the northeast and passes through Montpelier . It continues into Wells County to the north . Norfolk Southern also owns Blackford County 's east ? west line located in the southern half of the county . An 8 @-@ mile (13 km) section of this line , between Converse and Hartford City , was abandoned during the last decade , and track has been removed . The line is still in service north of State Road 26 , between Hartford City and Upland in Grant County . In October 2009 , Central Railroad Company of Indianapolis pursued a leasing agreement to operate the east ? west line with Norfolk Southern Railway in Blackford County . However , the line currently does not appear on the Central Railroad Company of Indianapolis system map .

= = Education and health care = =

The county 's five public schools are administered by the Blackford County School Corporation . During the 2010 ? 11 school year , a total of 1 @,@ 943 students attended these schools . The county school system was reorganized in 1963 , after a county @-@ wide vote favored a single school system for the entire county . As a result of this decision , Hartford City and Montpelier High Schools graduated their last classes in 1969 , and a new high school serving the entire county was constructed in time for the 1969 ? 1970 school year . Like the county , the new high school was named after Isaac Newton Blackford , and is called Blackford High School . The school is located a few miles north of Hartford City , and is therefore somewhat near the center of the county . The school was designed for 1 @,@ 200 students , and initial enrollment totaled to 1 @,@ 150 students , serving grades 9 through 12 . Current high school enrollment is less than 650 . All students in grades 7 and 8 attend Blackford Junior High School . Although the county was served by eight elementary schools during the 1980s , consolidations have decreased the number of elementary schools to three . Montpelier Elementary School serves grades 1 through 6 , and also has kindergarten classes . In Hartford City , Southside Elementary School hosts a kindergarten and grades 1 through 3 , while students in grades 4 through 6 attend Northside Elementary School .
At least four universities are located close to Blackford County . All four are located in adjacent counties , but are less than 25 miles (40 km) from Hartford City . Ball State University is the largest and most well known , and is located south of Hartford City in Muncie . Muncie is also home to Ivy Tech State College @-@ East Central . Private school Indiana Wesleyan University is located in Marion , which is west of Montpelier . Another private school , Taylor University , is less than 10

miles (16 km) west of Hartford City in Upland .

The cities of Montpelier and Hartford City both have public libraries . The Public Library of Montpelier and Harrison Township was built in 1907 and 1908 . This building is also known as the Montpelier Carnegie Library because it was made possible by a grant from philanthropist (and former business magnate) Andrew Carnegie . The library was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2007 . Hartford City 's Public library was also made possible by a grant from Carnegie , and it was built in 1903 . The Carnegie Fund required local towns to do fundraising to match the grants , and to commit to operating the libraries after their construction . In many localities , women 's groups were instrumental in organizing and doing fundraising for the libraries , both at the time of construction and since . Another library located in Hartford City belongs to the Blackford County Historical Society , and a museum is housed in the same building .

The Blackford County Health Department is located in Hartford City , and has a staff of nine people that serves and educates the county . Immunization and blood pressure clinics are provided in addition to educational services and emergency preparedness . The county 's hospital is Indiana University Health Blackford Hospital , a 15 @-@ bed facility located on Hartford City 's north side . This facility was opened January 2005 , and includes a medical office building and ambulance garage .

= = Media = =

The first newspaper in Blackford County was The Hartford City Times , which was started by Dr. John Moler in 1852 . Moler ran a drug store and print shop , and the Times was mostly an advertiser . At least one source considers The Blackford County News , which was started later in 1852 , as the county ? s first newspaper ? possibly because the Times was mostly for advertising . Across the county in Montpelier , the The Montpelier Examiner was first published in 1879 , and that newspaper is the predecessor of the town ? s long @-@ time newspaper , The Montpelier Herald . The county 's first daily newspaper , the Evening News , was started in 1894 by Edward Everett Cox . This Hartford City newspaper was eventually renamed Hartford City News . After Cox ? s death in the 1930s , the Cox family sold the Hartford City News to the owners of Hartford City ? s Times @-@ Gazette , and the combined entity became the Hartford City News @-@ Times . Changing ownership over the years , the Hartford City News @-@ Times continued operations through the 20th century . During the 21st century , the newspaper began using the name News @-@ Times , and calls itself " Blackford County ? s only daily newspaper " .

The two major television markets that reach Blackford County are Indianapolis and Fort Wayne . Although a few lower @-@ powered stations are located closer to Blackford County in cities such as Muncie , Marion , and Kokomo , these stations typically do not have a broadcast range that covers all of Blackford County . There are no AM radio stations based in Blackford County , but plenty of nearby areas have AM stations in broadcast range . This includes Indianapolis , Fort Wayne , Muncie , and Marion among others . Plenty of FM stations are also in broadcast range , and Blackford County has FM radio stations located in Hartford City and Montpelier . Hartford City , Montpelier , and portions of the county 's rural areas have internet access available .

= = Notable people = =

Kevin A. Ford was born in Portland , Indiana , in 1960 . His family moved to Montpelier , Indiana , and he graduated from Blackford High School in 1978 . Ford holds four academic degrees , and retired from active duty as a colonel in the United States Air Force in 2008 . He was the pilot for the Space Shuttle Discovery during its August 2009 flight , and has logged over 332 hours in outer space . On October 23 , 2012 , Ford began another voyage into outer space . This time , his journey was aboard a Russian spacecraft , with the International Space Station as his destination .

Clarence G. Johnson was the first president of Overhead Door Corporation , and lived in Hartford City , Indiana , from 1923 until he died in 1935 . He was a pioneer in the development of garage doors , and holds numerous patents . One of Johnson 's more notable inventions is the first " electric

operator for sectional upward @-@ acting doors " . Johnson 's Overhead Door Corporation was a major employer in Blackford County for over 60 years , employing as many as 515 people during its peak years .

Maurice Clifford Townsend was born August 11 , 1884 , on a small farm in Blackford County 's Licking Township . After graduating from college in Marion , Indiana , Townsend served as superintendent of Blackford County schools , superintendent of Grant County schools , and as a representative of the Blackford @-@ Grant District in the Indiana General Assembly . Townsend was elected as Indiana 's lieutenant governor in 1932 . He won the 1936 election for governor , and served the single four @-@ year term allowed by law . After Townsend 's public service in Indiana , he served in the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt , and worked in agriculture related offices . Townsend 's legacy is directing school buses to be painted yellow for safety and identification purposes , an idea that spread nationwide .

Erika Wicoff is one of the most decorated female athletes in Indiana University history , earning three Big Ten Player of the Year awards as a golfer . She was the Big Ten women 's golf champion in 1994 , 1995 , and 1996 . A native of Hartford City , Indiana , she later competed in the Ladies Professional Golf Association . Wicoff was inducted into the Indiana Athletics Hall of Fame in 2006 .