Hancock County

The maps and tables in this publication were prepared using PCensus 7.06 for MapInfo and MapInfo Professional 7.0.
Hancock County is located in Central Indiana. It is bordered by the following counties: Marion to the west, Hamilton to the northwest, Madison to the north, Henry to the east, Rush to the southeast, and Shelby to the south. U.S. Highways 40 and 52, and Interstate Highway 70 cross the county. Elevation is 750-950 feet. The terrain is nearly level except in areas along waterways, where it is slightly sloping. The landscape features maple, beech, oak and birch trees. The county pertains to the Indiana and Ohio Till Plain land resource area.

Hancock county is in the Eastern Time Zone and observes DST. Average daily temperatures are 18°/36° in January and 63°/86° in July. Annual precipitation is about 40 and snowfall about 26 inches. Typically the first freeze of the season occurs October 10-15 (north) and October 15-20 (south). The last freeze varies from April 25-30. The growing season lasts about 163-178 days.

Agricultural activity is diversified with corn for grain, soybeans, and hogs/pigs. About four-fifths of the land is in farms and around nine-tenths of that land is in cash crops. An additional crop is winter wheat. A main vegetable is sweet corn. Other livestock include cattle/calves and sheep/lambs. Main natural resources include construction sand, gravel, petroleum, and forestland. Water resources include the Geist Reservoir and the Big Blue River.

Communities include the city of Greenfield (the county seat) and the towns of Cumberland (which extends into Marion County), New Palestine, Shirley (which extends into Henry County), Spring Lake, and Wilkinson.
3. Location and Historical Notes

Famous sons and daughters of Hancock County include James Whitcomb Riley and Jaycie Phelps. In his poetry, James Whitcomb Riley (1849-1916) described his Indiana home during his career as a spellbinding performer of storytelling and poetry reading across the U.S. and Europe. As a youth he seemed rather lost and drifted around Indiana, until he found his niche as performer, author and resident poet for the Indianapolis Journal. The Riley Children’s Hospital is named in his honor.

Jaycie Phelps gained renown as an Olympic gymnast, member of the “Magnificent Seven” who captured the first gold metal for U.S. women gymnasts in 1996 in Atlanta.


Hancock County is not a tobacco-producing county, according to the Strategic Development Group’s “Alternative Agricultural Strategy” (Bloomington, March 15, 2001) report, which is part of Governor Joseph E. Kernan’s “Recipient Final Reports for Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture Grant Programs” (http://www.in.gov/oca/grants/valueadd/VAFinalReports.html):