Jay County
3. Geographic and Historical Notes

Jay County is located in East Central Indiana, bordered by Ohio to the east. It is also bordered by the following counties: Adams to the north, Wells to the northwest, Blackford to the west, Delaware to the southwest, and Randolph to the south. U.S. Highways 27 and State Highways 26 and 67 cross the county. Elevation is 800-1,100 feet. The terrain is nearly level throughout the county, except slightly sloping near creeks in the southern central areas and the northwest. The landscape features birch, beech, oak, maple, and hickory trees. The county pertains to the Indiana and Ohio Till Plain land resource area.

Jay county is in the Eastern Time Zone and observes DST. Average daily temperatures are 18°/35° in January and 61°/86° in July. Annual precipitation is about 38 and snowfall about 35 inches. Typically the first freeze of the season occurs October 5-10, except October 10-15 (southeast corner). The last freeze varies from May 5-10 (north) to May 5-10 (south). The growing season lasts about 148-158 days.

Agricultural activity is diversified with livestock being very important. About three-fourths of the land is in farms and about three-fourths of that land is in cash crops. Main crops are corn for grain, soybeans, hay, oats, and winter wheat. Apples are an important fruit. Popcorn is a special crop. Livestock includes pullets/hens, cattle/calves, milk cows, hogs/pigs, and turkeys. Main natural resources include construction sand and gravel, crushed stone, petroleum, and forestland. Water resources include the Salamonie and Little Salamonie Rivers.

Communities include the cities of Portland (the county seat) and Dunkirk (which extends into Blackford County), and the towns of Bryant, Pennville, Redkey, and Salamina.

Sources: Map from PCensus for MapInfo; Geographic Notes from Indiana Facts: Flying the Colors by John Clements, 1995.
Famous sons and daughters of Jay County include Twyla Tharp, famous choreographer and dancer, born in Portland in 1941. Tharp left Indiana at a young age and went on to study modern dance with Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, and others. She danced with the Paul Taylor Dance Company, then left to found her own dance troop in 1965. She has done choreography for several movies, including *Amadeus* (1984).

Jay 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):