



The area including Carroll County was first visited by French traders around 1670. In 1787 it was a part of the Northwest Territory, and in 1800 part of the Indiana Territory. County formation had begun in Indiana in 1790, long before Indiana became a state in 1816. In 1828 General Samuel Milroy presented a petition for the formation of Carroll County, named for Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the only surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence. Carroll County was the 58th of Indiana's 92 counties to be formed.

The first settlers had come to Carroll County at the end of 1824, to the Delphi area. The earliest families were headed by Abner and Henry Robinson, Benjamin Angell, Daniel Baum, Daniel and William McCain, John Ballard, James Odell, Isaac Jackson, Daniel Vandeventer, and Samuel Milroy. By 1826 there were several hundred settlers. They built cabins, cleared the heavy timber for roads and farmland, and built sawmills and gristmills. Most of the settlers came from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, and Kentucky.

The county seat of government was at first called Carrollton but was soon changed to Delphi. The first court was at the home of Daniel Baum who was also the first county treasurer. Lots were sold in Delphi in 1828, and in 1831 the first courthouse was completed. The first jail was built in 1841, the second courthouse in 1856, and the second jail in 1871.

Townships were organized, just after the county, in 1828. At first all of Carroll County was divided into Deer Creek, Tippecanoe, and Rock Creek townships. In 1830 Jackson was formed, and in 1831 Clay and Adams. Burlington Township was founded in 1832; Carrollton, Democrat, and Washington in 1835; Jefferson in 1836; Madison in 1837; and Monroe in 1840. Nearly a century later, in 1937, Liberty Township was subdivided from Rock Creek. Most of the area was heavily wooded and much of it was marshy. The major waterways were Wildcat Creek, Tippecanoe River, Wabash River, and Deer Creek.

The Wabash and Erie Canal was a major construction project through Carroll County around 1840. It provided for much better water transportation to take products to market and bring in goods and new settlers. Not much later, however, the railroads began building in the area and put the Canal out of business by the 1870s. The Wabash Railroad came from Logansport in Cass County to Lafayette in Tippecanoe County in 1856. In 1872 the Vandalia Line (later Pennsylvania Railroad) came from Logansport through Camden, Flora, and Cutler. In 1879 there was a line from Delphi to Rensselaer, and in 1882 it continued south through Rossville in

Clinton County, eventually being called the Monon Railroad. For a time there was also an interurban line from Logansport to Lafayette through Delphi.

In early times, roads were the Indian trails. Better roads were cleared, and in 1849, the Delphi–Frankfort wooden plank road was built; it and others were toll roads. Others were from Delphi to Pittsburg and the Michigan Road north from Burlington. These were in deteriorated condition by the time the railroad came through. In 1880, free gravel roads began to be built—Delphi north along Range Line, Delphi to Flora, Delphi to Camden, Delphi south toward Rossville, Delphi to Prince William, Bringham to Michigan Road, and several others. Wooden covered bridges built during the 1850s were later replaced by iron bridges over the major waterways.

All the while, more settlers arrived and took up businesses in addition milling, store-keeping, and farming. The population grew rapidly. In 1830 the county population was 1,611; by 1850 it had grown to 11,015, and in 1900 to 19,953 citizens. After 1900, the growth boom ceased and the population hovered around 16,000 for 50 years. In the 2000 census for Carroll County, the population finally broke 20,000. During the twentieth century, however, the population shifted away from the rural townships which have half or fewer the number of people in 2000 as they had in 1900. There are many fewer and dramatically larger farms, and with improvements in methods and machinery, relatively few people are required to work the farms.

The first towns in Carroll County were Delphi, Camden, Burlington, Pittsburg, and many others which no longer exist or are greatly diminished in size. Rockfield, Burrows, Flora, Cutler, Bringham, and Deer Creek formed as more substantial roads and as railroads came through. Yeoman, Radnor, Owasco, and Ockley were founded in the 1880s as the trains arrived in those areas. Today the largest towns are Delphi (population 3,015), Flora (2,227), Camden (582), and Burlington (444).

The county is still agricultural, including very productive farmland and large hog-producing operations as well as a large pork processing plant. While many of the county's residents now work in surrounding counties, a very significant number of those who are descended from the early settlers still call Carroll County home.

The 2003 opening of the Wabash & Erie Canal Conference and Interpretive Center along with Canal Park and ten miles of historic trails in Delphi has helped make Carroll County a destination for those interested in history. The Canal Days Festival each July 4th weekend as well as the Old Settlers celebration held each August since 1855 also draw many visitors. Smaller annual festivals in Deer Creek, Camden, Flora, and Burlington are celebrated each year. The Delphi and Camden Preservation Societies, Wabash & Erie Canal Association, and the Carroll County Historical Society help keep history alive. Groups promote architectural tours of the many beautiful historic homes in Delphi and Flora. The Tourism Committee of the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce publicizes local attractions including those in all parts of the county such as Adams Mill as well as the county's covered and other notable bridges.