

NORTHERN KENTUCKY VIEWS PRESENTS:

Carroll County



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CARROLL COUNTY

Carroll County is situated on the extreme northwestern boundary of the Outer Bluegrass Region of Kentucky on the Ohio River adjacent to the state of Indiana. The county is of a peculiar shape, with a long neck extending to the northwest, but is not large and covers an area of only 132 square miles. The elevations are low, ranging from 450 feet above sea level at the Ohio River to something over 700 feet on the highest ridges. Carrollton, the county seat, at the mouth of the Kentucky River has an elevation of 475 feet.

Physiographically the county is maturely dissected with narrow winding ridges and constricted meandering valleys. In general the topography is rolling to hilly. The county is drained by a very large number of streams. The Ohio River forms its northern boundary, the Kentucky River runs through the center of the county, Eagle Creek forms part of the southern boundary and the Little Kentucky River drains part of the western area. All of these streams have numerous local tributaries.

Geologically the outcrops of the county are limited to Upper Ordovician limestones and shales. The northern part of the county, however, has been glaciated by the Wisconsin ice sheet and a considerable amount of glacial material may be recognized. In addition, the river flood plains contain large amounts of Pleistocene and Recent alluviums. The mineral resources of the county consist of excellent limestones and unlimited supplies of sand and gravel. Both oil and gas have been found in small quantities in shallow wells in the eastern section.

As would be expected from its location on the Ohio River, and with the large number of other streams within its boundaries, Carroll County shows many evidences of prehistoric occupation. Unfortunately many of these sites have been destroyed, but enough remain to show that the region was extensively if not densely inhabited by aborigines. The following sites have been definitely located, and, as would be expected, most of them are along the streams:

1. The best site, which the authors have seen in Carroll County and one of the finest in this section of the state, is a large mound on the

top of a ridge overlooking both the Ohio and Kentucky rivers, on the farm of J. R. Wilson, two and one-half miles west of Prestonville. It is a ridge mound with the long diameter north and south and measures two hundred feet in length, fifty feet in width and fifteen feet in height. The site is well known to residents of the region and has often been dug into with the result that many skeletons and large numbers of artifacts are said to have been discovered. When visited by the authors, however, in 1931, these excavations seemed to have been very superficial. The site is one of great scenic beauty and offers a magnificent view up the Kentucky River and both up and down the Ohio River for many miles. We suspect that this mound, if thoroughly excavated, would yield valuable information regarding the prehistoric culture of the region.

2. A village site near the bank of the Little Kentucky River about three-quarters of a mile from its mouth and one-half mile west of Prestonville. The site was located by workmen who were excavating for a new road and was reported to Dr. C. L. Dunn and Mr. Jesse Carraco of Carrollton who made a careful examination of the area. One skeleton was discovered and numerous artifacts were found, including arrowheads, celts and a pestle. Large amounts of mussel shell were found throughout the site.
3. The remains of an ancient fortification on the top of a high hill, two miles east of Carrollton and about half a mile from the Ohio River which it overlooks. Vestiges of stone and earthworks are still to be seen and the area has yielded many artifacts. This is probably the site mentioned by Collins¹ as a "fort on the Ohio River two and a half miles from the mouth of the Kentucky River" since the distances mentioned agree very exactly.
4. A village or camp site near the mineral spring known as "Blue Lick Well" just at the edge of the city limits of Carrollton on the south. When visited by one of the authors in 1928, surface artifacts, flint spawls and fragments of pottery were still numerous on this site.
5. An area, known as the "Hunter Bottoms," about nine miles west of Carrollton and two and a half miles east of Milton, has long been famous for evidences of prehistoric occupation. Large numbers of artifacts have been found in this area and a flint outcrop suggests that it may represent a quarry site. In addition, numerous mounds are found in these bottoms and on one of them, on the farm of Jennie Conway, a house was built. In excavating for the basement of this house and in digging the cistern, several skeletons were found. It is probable that this part of the river valley represents a considerable aboriginal village with the usual associations of mounds, workshop, quarry site and burial field.
6. A mound on the farm of Forest Butts, two miles east of Carrollton. So far as is known, this mound has never been excavated. Reported by James H. Newman.
7. A village site, ten miles east of Carrollton and two miles east of Ghent, on the farm of R. H. Froman. In addition to the usual surface material of the kitchen midden types, this site has yielded numbers of good artifacts.
8. A village site on the Hockins Farm, four miles southeast of Carrollton. A number of mounds, formerly on this site, have now been destroyed. Surface material is abundant.

¹ Collins, Lewis, *History of Kentucky*. 1874.

In addition to the above mentioned sites, Rafinesque speaks² of a fort in Carroll County a quarter of a mile from the bank of the Ohio River which we have not been able to locate unless it be the one here described as Number 3. Also, Young states³ that there are to be found in Carroll County the curious "circles" or depressions which may represent earthworks, but he gives no location for any of them.

Surface finds are common throughout the county. Dr. C. L. Dunn, of Carrollton, and Mr. Robert Froman, of Sanders, have good collections of this material, most of which is local in character.

² Rafinesque, C. S., *Ancient History of Kentucky*. 1824.

³ Young, Bennett, *Prehistoric Men of Kentucky*, p. 74. 1910.