

History

The Union County Sheriff's Office is located in Southwest Iowa in the county seat, Creston. Our office is in the Union County Law Enforcement Center along with the Creston Police Department and is attached to the North side of the Union County Courthouse. This provides us with direct access from the jail to the courtrooms on the top floor of the Courthouse.

According to historical books, the county became independent in 1853. During this time the struggle between the North and the South was at its height, the preservation of the Union was foremost in the Legislators minds, thus the name Union County was born. The population of the county, at this time, was eighty. Afton was selected as the county seat in 1855. In 1857 a two story building was approved to be built as a courthouse and later a jail was constructed of heavy lumber and timbers adjoining the courthouse. This jail was in use about twenty years. A new brick jail was built in 1880 in Afton to replace the wooden structure. In 1890, the town of Creston became the county seat. The town of Creston, established in 1869, had been chosen by the railroad as a site for a roundhouse as it was on the highest point or "crest" of the existing line between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. The Courthouse was moved to a building that was erected in 1888 in Creston and the basement of this building was used as the Jail for several years. In 1896 a two story brick jail was built on the lot adjoining the Courthouse. The front part of the building was occupied by the Sheriff as a residence and the back was the jail. The Courthouse in Creston was eventually outgrown and a new Courthouse was dedicated on March 10, 1953. In 1977, a new County-City Law Enforcement Center was opened and connected to the Courthouse.

On March 8, 1926, Sheriff Fred Collings was shot while serving papers to "Big George" Gibson. Collings was handed condemnation notices shortly after noon to serve on Gibson after the Board of Supervisors had approved the condemning of the land for highway construction purposes. Approximately an hour later Deputy U.S. Marshall A. L. Burke appeared at the Courthouse so Collings took him along for the ride. It was only by chance that Burke accompanied Collings as he had planned the trip to the farm near Thayer alone. While speaking with Gibson's sister-in-law at the residence, Collings spotted "Big George" walking toward the barn. Collings motioned for Burke to come with him. Burke heard a shot and saw Collings clutch his side saying "The dirty skunk got me". This occurred shortly after 2:00 PM and Burke loaded the Sheriff into the car and rushed him to the Doctor's office in Thayer. Burke was notified that "Big George" was in town and was able to arrest him and take him to the jail. On March 9, 1926, at 11:15 AM Sheriff N.F. (Fred) Collings died at Greater Community Hospital in Creston. Sheriff Collings was in his third term in office when he was killed. He was elected in 1920. After his death, Fred's brother Frank was appointed Sheriff (he was the current Deputy Sheriff) and Fred's second brother, Harold was appointed as Deputy. May 26, 1926, at 8:50 AM George Gibson was convicted of murder by a Jury of 8 men and 4 women. The Jury spent more than 10 hours in deliberation. Gibson was given a Life Sentence. The shooting of Collings was the second that has occurred for the Sheriff's Office. In 1900, Tom Walsh, Deputy Sheriff, was shot and killed by George Williams. Walsh had gone to the farm known as the Davenport farm, to serve papers ordering Williams removed from the house, which was rented. Walsh met Williams when he

arrived and was shot and killed. Williams was convicted of first degree murder and was sentenced to life in prison. He served 16 years at Fort Madison and then escaped and was never captured.

Union County has a population of 12,309, and consists of 426 Square Miles. There are seven incorporated cities and one unincorporated city (Kent). Creston is the county seat and the largest city with a population of 7597. The populations for the other cities are Afton 917, Arispe 89, Cromwell 120, Lorimor 427, Shannon City 70, and Thayer 66. The city of Creston has its own Police Department with a Chief and eleven officers, and Afton has a Chief of Police. The Union County Sheriff's Office provides coverage to the other cities along with providing mutual aid to Creston and Afton.

Union County is well known for its fishing and outdoor recreation areas. The newest lake is North of Afton and was completed in 1995. Three Mile Watershed Project was built with three primary objectives: good drinking water, flood control, and recreation. Other lakes in the county include: Green Valley State Park, Twelve Mile Lake, Summit Lake, and Thayer Lake.

Creston is home to Southwest Iowa Balloon Days, which is held annually on the third weekend of September. Now in its 31st year, the event is the second largest of its kind in the state with over 60 hot air balloons participating. In addition to the balloon races, there is also a parade, flea market, craft fair and various other activities.

There are several industries in Union County. Some of those industries are: Bunn-O-Matic, manufacturer of coffee and beverage equipment; Farley's & Sathers Candy Company, Inc. manufacturer of non-chocolate confectionery and gum products; Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroad; Fansteel/Wellman Dynamics Corporation, manufacturer of premium quality aluminum and magnesium sand castings primarily for aerospace applications; Vanmark Equipment LLC, manufacturer of industrial food processing equipment; Gits Manufacturing Company, designs and builds precision air flow products for the automotive industry. Union County also has a modern health care facility, Greater Regional Medical Center; opportunities for higher education, Southwestern Community College and Hair Tech School of Cosmetology; and a local radio station, KSIB Creston Radio.

Our staff consists of the Sheriff, four Deputies, five Jailers, one part-time Jailer, two part-time Transport Officers, and one Civil Clerk.

Sheriff Rick Piel has been in law enforcement for over 31 years. He began his career with the Creston Police Department at the age of 18, before he could legally purchase the ammunition for his service weapon. He was an officer with the Creston Police Department over 23 years until he was elected Union County Sheriff and began his duties on January 2, 2001. Rick and his wife Jeanne have a son, Chris, who lives in Kansas City, and a daughter, Casee, who lives near Marshalltown. Rick followed his father's footsteps in Law Enforcement as his dad was a Trooper for the Iowa State Patrol, and now his daughter, Casee, is continuing the tradition as a police officer for the Marshalltown Police Department.

Chief Deputy, Steve Maitlen has been with the Union County Sheriff's Office for 18 years. Before coming to Union County he worked for the Corning Police Department for 2 1/2 years. He started his career in Law Enforcement in 1988 and graduated from ILEA in March 1989.

Sergeant Dan McNeill has worked for the Union County Sheriff's Office for seven years. Prior to Union County he worked for the Afton Police Department for three years. He graduated from the ILEA in April 1999. Sgt. McNeill is a certified firearms instructor for handguns, shotguns, and rifles and teaches our weapon permit classes. He is also a certified firefighter and is a volunteer with the Afton Fire Department.

Deputy Brian Bolton has worked for the Union County Sheriff's Office for six years. This has been his first job in Law Enforcement. He graduated from the ILEA in March of 2003. He is Clandestine Lab certified and is also a certified Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) as well as a DRE instructor.

Deputy Chad Woods has worked for the Union County Sheriff's Office for five years and had previously worked here for seven years. He graduated from the ILEA in March of 1995.

Union County has five full-time Jailers who cover the jail 24 hours, 7 days a week. Our Jail holds 11 inmates. We have three single cells and two four-person cells. The Jail is generally full to capacity including sending inmates to be temporarily housed in other county jails. The Jail meets standards to house male and female prisoners. Meals are prepared at our local HyVee and delivered to the Jail.

Jail Administrator, Dave Danielson has been working for the Union County Sheriff's Office for 25 years and was honored with a plaque for his years of service in December 2007. Dorie Shiltz, Assistant Jail Administrator, has 10 years of service with the Union County Sheriff's Office. Other full-time Jailers are: Josh Christensen, 4 years of service; Tasha Peterman, 2 years; John Wolfe, 6 months. Besides the full-time Jailers we have one part-time Jailer, Whitney Nucaro, who started in March 2008 and helps cover shifts mostly on the weekends. We are fortunate to have two part-time employees to help with transporting inmates and court ordered committals. They are Curt Olson and Lonnie Novy.

The Union County Sheriff's Office has one full-time Civil Clerk. Tracy Chapman has 5 years of service.

Because we have a shared Law Enforcement Center, all Dispatchers are employees of the Creston Police Department. We have a very good working relationship with the Creston Police Department and get along well sharing one Law Enforcement Center.