

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; Ferrara 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; and Vanmark Equipment LLC, manufacturer of industrial food processing equipment. Union County also has a modern health care facility, Greater Regional Medical Center; opportunities for higher education, Southwestern Community College; and a local radio station, KSIB Creston Radio.