



Tama County, Iowa  
Economic Development

# Chelsea, Iowa

## The story of Chelsea...

Less than a mile east of where the present Chelsea is located, Otter Creek Station once existed. By the end of 1861, the Chicago, Iowa, and Nebraska Railroad, later known as the Chicago and Northwestern, had extended westward that far into Iowa. When Otter Creek Station was moved about three-quarters of a mile west to the present location of Chelsea, and the railroad extended westward, the name was changed. One story has it that S.G. Breese, one of the original owners of land near the site, named it for Chelsea, MA, from where he had emigrated. Another is that John I. Blair named it for Chelsea, England.

In the history of Chelsea, floods have often played havoc with the town and its environs but its citizens return and carry on the tradition of hardiness.

Chelsea lies along the original Lincoln Highway route which was America's first "coast-to-coast" highway. The original steel bridge on the Lincoln Highway in Chelsea was replaced in 1928-29 with the Otter Creek Bridge, which in turn had to be replaced in 2007. Citizens of Chelsea encouraged the preservation of the lamp posts which graced the old bridge railings. That action brought high accolades from the National Lincoln Highway Association: *"Those of us dedicated to the preservation of the Lincoln Highway were shocked and saddened when it was disclosed that the historic bridge was gone, but now we learn that the Tama County Engineers are retaining not only the 1928 bridge railings but the light standards as well. Thus, the widened and strengthened bridge will continue to reflect not just the charm of the old Lincoln Highway, but bring a new measure of safety to travelers as well. This is the very essence of wise historical preservation."* Gregory M. Franzwa, Editor, The Lincoln Highway Forum Quarterly Journal of the National Lincoln Highway Association.



**Location:** Chelsea is located in east central Iowa at the intersection of county road V18 and county road E66. Chelsea is 3 miles south of U.S. highway 30 and 12 miles east of U.S. highway 63.

**Population:** 277 (2005).

**Per Capita Income:** \$13,608 (2000); county average \$24,112 (2002); state average, \$28,089 (2002); median household income \$30,625 (2000).

**Geography/Climate:** Gently rolling mid-continent farmlands. Four seasons. A few brittle cold winter days may not rise above zero; a few sultry summer days may reach high 90's. July average temperature is 72, January average temperature is 14. Precipitation averages: 35 inches of rain, 32 inches of snow.

**Employment:** Corn, soybeans, cattle, & hogs anchor the agricultural economy. Larger pay-rolls: Chelsea Elementary School: 10; Chelsea Savings Bank: 5.

**Financial Institutions:** 1 commercial bank: Chelsea Savings Bank has four statewide branches with total deposits of \$63,786,000.

**Newspaper:** Tama News Herald, published Thursdays. One-year subscription: \$39.00; Subscribe to both Toledo Chronicle & Tama News Herald for \$52.40/year.

Other regional newspapers: Marshalltown Times-Republican, Des Moines Register, Cedar Rapids Gazette, Waterloo Courier, El Heraldo Hispano.:



**Communications:** Local Public Access, Cable and broadband available via Mediacom. Phone service and High Speed DSL internet via Iowa Telecom.

**Utilities:** Alliant Energy provides electric service & natural gas for residents of Chelsea. Alliant offers a rebate for customers who build an energy-efficient home. Water & sewer are provided by the City of Chelsea.

**Health Care:** Nearest medical clinic is in Tama, 12 miles away. Volunteer EMS crew.

**Schools:** South Tama County Community School District: enrollment of 1751; 14.4 students per teacher, \$6,499 spending per student. State ACT average 22; SAT average 1204, graduation rate 89.4%.

**Educational Level:** 0% of Chelsea residents have an associate's degree; 3% have a bachelor's degree; 1% have a graduate or professional degree.

**Library:** Chelsea Public Library has 6,980 books & serial volumes, 3 public internet terminals, total circulation of 3,173. Circulation of children's materials: 1,585, children's program attendance: 78.

**Recreation:** 1 city park. Swimming, fishing, boating at Otter Creek Lake & Park, northwest of Chelsea. Iowa River runs through Chelsea, with several boat landings. Otter Creek State Marsh is a 3,600 acre state-managed wetland complex two miles west of Chelsea.

**Housing:** Median value of housing units in Tama County (2000) is \$64,200; median gross rent of units in Tama County (2000) is \$418. Building lots are available in a new housing development called Riverview Estates with water, electric, and some sewer utilities already installed.

**Taxes:** State sales tax rate is 5% plus Chelsea's local option sales tax is 1% and school infrastructure local option tax is 1% for a total sales tax rate of 7% in Chelsea. State income tax rates range from 0.36% to 8.98% plus a base rate.

**Churches:** Methodist, Catholic.

**Further Information:**

City Clerk's Office

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Tama County Economic Development

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