



Tama County, Iowa  
Economic Development

# Tama, Iowa

## The story of Tama...

What is now the city of Tama, Iowa, was platted in the year 1862, but at that time was called "Iuka" in honor of the men from Tama County who had participated in the Battle of Iuka, Mississippi. Later the name was changed to "Tama City" and again to "Tama". The name Tama is an Indian word; however, historians are not agreed as to the meaning of the word. Some claim it means "beautiful, lovely, or pleasant", while others claim it means "a bear with a voice that makes the rocks tremble". Mr. George Youngbear, a member of the Meskwakis, was asked his opinion on the meaning of the word and he stated that the word "Tama" was derived from the Indian word "Towaime" which they associate with the sound and vibration of thunder.

Among the early industries in Tama were: a flour mill, a grist mill, a saw mill, a copper shop, a butter tub factory, a broom factory, a plow factory, brewery, creamery, brick plant, a furniture factory, and a paper mill. All of these were small industries and the only one to survive the changes over the years was the paper mill, now known as Tama Paper Board, which has been greatly improved and enlarged over the years.

Tama's annual celebration is the Lincoln Highway Bridge Festival in May. They also partner with neighboring Toledo to host a car show and cruise in June and holiday festivities in December.



**Location:** Tama is located in east central Iowa at the intersection of U.S. highways 30 & 63. Tama is centrally located between three of Iowa's largest cities—Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, and Des Moines. I-80 is just 20 miles south, I-35 is 55 miles west, and I-380 is 50 miles east of Tama.

**Population:** 2,603 (2005).

**Per Capita Income:** \$16,676 (2000); county average \$24,112 (2002); state average, \$28,089 (2002); median household income \$35,531 (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. Summer average temperature in the 70's, winter in the 20's. Precipitation averages: 35 inches of rain, 32 inches of snow.

**Employment:** Corn, soybeans, cattle, & hogs anchor the agricultural economy. Larger payrolls: Meskwaki Bingo, Casino, Hotel, 1,300; South Tama County School District, 275; Tama Paper Board, 103.

**Financial Institutions:** 1 commercial bank: Lincoln Savings Bank has 12 statewide branches with total deposits of \$404,818,000.

**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: Des Moines Register, Cedar Rapids Gazette, Waterloo Courier, El Heraldo Hispano.



**Communications:** 1 local radio station, KZAT 95.5FM. Local public access, cable and broadband available via Mediacom. Phone service and High Speed DSL internet via lowatelecom.

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

**Health Care:** Mercy Care Community Physicians has one medical office in Tama. One nursing home, 2 dentists in local practice.

**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:** 2% of Tama residents have an associate's degree; 6% have a bachelor's degree; 1% have a graduate or professional degree.

**Library:** Tama Public Library has 24,673 books & serial volumes, 12 public internet terminals, total circulation of 42,104. Circulation of children's materials: 14,150, children's program attendance: 1,466.

**Recreation:** 1 city park (playground, baseball diamond, soccer field), new aquatic center built in 2005, rec trail spanning the western edge of Tama and neighboring Toledo. ATV park at southern edge of Tama. Iowa River runs south of Tama. Swimming, fishing, boating at Otter Creek Lake & Park, northeast of Tama.

**Housing:** Median value of housing units in Tama County (2000) is \$64,200; median gross rent of units in Tama County (2000) is \$418. Tama offers a 100% exemption from taxes on the first \$75,000 actual value added by home improvements for a period of three years; certain requirements apply.

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

**Churches:** Catholic, Baptist, & Lutheran. Presbyterian & Methodist in neighboring Toledo.

**Further Information:**

City Clerk's Office

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Tama-Toledo Chamber of Commerce

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Tama County Economic Development

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