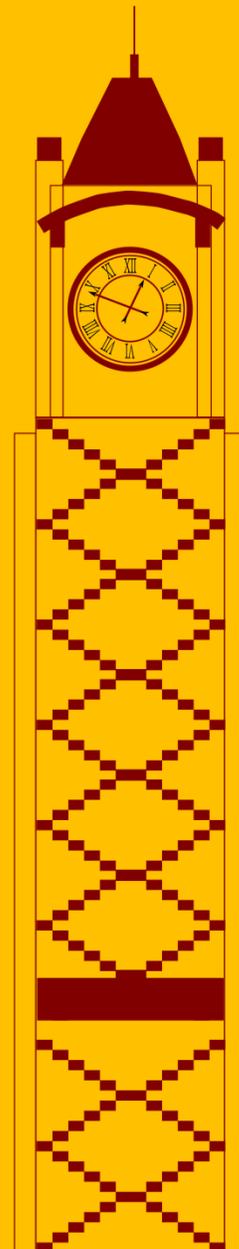

Walking tour of CAMPUSTOWN Ames, Iowa

*History and Change in
Ames' Busiest Neighborhood*



When it was still new, the neighborhood directly south of the Iowa State University campus went by many names. The official term was the **Fourth Ward**, referring to the political jurisdiction that still encompasses the neighborhood to this day. Another term was **Champlinnville**, named for the local businessman who established the first substantial commercial enterprises in the neighborhood. A popular nickname for many years was **Dogtown**, a term that was applied to rough neighborhoods in many cities and towns across the country. Although a more colorful explanation for the name “Dogtown” is that the modest buildings that once dotted the hill south of campus resembled prairie dogs. A simpler answer is that there used to be a lot of dogs running around the neighborhood.

Whatever the reason, no developer wants to announce that they’re investing money in a place called Dogtown. As early as the 1920s there was an effort by local merchants to rebrand the neighborhood **Campustown**, and today this is the name that has taken hold. Certainly anyone who remembers the neighborhood as Dogtown would hardly recognize it today; Campustown has undergone a remarkable makeover in the last two decades, experiencing a frenzied construction boom fueled by rising property values and Iowa State’s growing student population.

Today, Campustown is in the midst of transition, where buildings gritty, old, and humble sit adjacent to the shiny, new, and large. This tour is meant to highlight the neighborhood’s transformation from farmland to modest commercial strip to urban center, contrasting Campustown’s emerging skyline to its remaining reminders of its past.

A couple doors down is an even older structure: at 2512 Lincoln Way is a wood-paneled building that dates back to 1908. Note the blocky false front on this building, suggestive of Old West architecture. At the other end of the block, at the corner of Lincoln and Hayward, is the former College Savings Bank, built in 1916 and currently a branch of U.S. Bank (although this building has been extensively remodeled over the years).



*The 2500 Block of Lincoln Way with the former College Savings Bank on the right, 1957
Photo credit of the Ames Tribune*

The nature of this block gives a sense of the character of other Campustown blocks prior to recent development, particularly the section of Lincoln Way where the Kingland Building now sits. The buildings here are much shorter, narrower and compact than those we now tend to see elsewhere in the neighborhood, and are occupied primarily by local businesses, something that is becoming increasingly rare due to Campustown’s rising rents. With the recent pace of gentrification in the neighborhood, how much longer these buildings and the businesses within them will remain is anyone’s guess. Already a sign of what the future might bring looms just around the corner—both figuratively and literally—in the form of a tall mixed-use structure currently under construction on Hayward Avenue.

Continue west to Hayward Avenue and you’ll return to the starting point of the tour.

11 – Lincoln Way & Welch

This bustling intersection has long been one of the primary entrances into campus and today still serves as an important point of transition between campus and town. As you look up Welch Avenue, you might notice that this is one of the few stretches of street in Campustown with trees; these were planted around the same time as the clock tower visible up the street.

Also note the planters, bicycle racks, and picnic tables placed atop the parking spaces on one side of the street; these were added in 2016 in an effort to improve the pedestrian space on Welch, and are another sign of the changing character of the neighborhood.



Lincoln Way looking west from Welch, 1958
Photo credit of the Ames Tribune

12 – 2500 Block of Lincoln Way

Continuing west on Lincoln, the buildings of the next block make for a stark contrast from the previous. Some of these are quite old; in fact, the two-story brick building at the corner of Lincoln and Welch dates back to 1915 and is the oldest surviving brick building in Campustown. For many years, this corner store held a popular pipe and tobacco shop. Today, it houses portions of Copyworks and Cafe Beaudelaire.

We'll start our tour on the west side of Hayward Avenue, just south of Lincoln Way.

1 – College Creek

We begin our tour with one of the oldest and most hidden features of the Campustown landscape. Within the overgrown concrete channel before you is College Creek, a stream that runs through the area. This creek has undergone considerable change as Campustown has developed.



Photo credit Dean Knudson

This is one of the few visible stretches of College Creek in Campustown; from here it travels through twin culverts buried under Hayward Avenue and Lincoln Way (*pictured during their assembly in 1963*), reemerging briefly on the northwest corner of Welch and Lincoln before feeding into Lake LaVerne on campus. College Creek is largely kept out of sight in Campustown, having been mostly buried for the purpose of facilitating commercial development on the surface.

2 – Ames Intermodal Facility

Adjacent to one of Campustown's oldest features is one of its newest. Completed in 2012, this building consists of a large parking garage that was built to help meet the demand for campus parking and a bus station that was created to bring all of Ames' intercity bus carriers under one roof.

Campustown's only public restrooms are available in the building's lobby, which you are free to use if you so need.

From the Ames Intermodal Facility, head east along Chamberlain Street and climb the hill into the heart of Campustown.

3 – Campustown’s oldest building

As you approach Welch Avenue, note the tall house on your left, sitting across the parking lot for AJ’s Liquor. This boarding house, still in use today, was built in 1904 and is likely the oldest standing building in Campustown.

Welch Avenue was once lined with houses like this one, which served as vital housing stock for the students and faculty of Iowa State in the 1900s. Nowadays, most of them have been demolished and those few that remain are tucked behind the commercial buildings that line Welch Avenue.

4 – Chamberlain & Welch

At the crest of the hill you’ll come across Welch Avenue, the focal point of the neighborhood. The two block stretch of Welch south of Lincoln Way is lined with bars and eateries along with plenty of neighborhood essentials.

The clock tower that overlooks the intersection was installed in the mid-1990s as part of an effort to beautify Welch Avenue. The clock tower’s design is meant to emulate the collegiate brick character of the ISU campus, and it frequently appears in promotional material for the city and Campustown. Recent years have brought other aesthetic enhancements to the intersection: a piece of public art sits on the northeast corner of the intersection in front of the local fire station, while a large mural depicting life in Ames adorns a building on the southeast corner.

The land on which the Kingland Building now sits once belonged to A.L. Champlin, a businessman who played an outsized role in the early development of Campustown. In the 1900s, Champlin established a livery business and a drug store on this site, and in the decades that followed his family filled in the rest of the block with buildings that would house many businesses over their long lives. Adjacent to the Cranford Apartments used to be the Varsity Theater, a cinema which dated back to 1938. A few doors down stood the Ames Theater, which was built in 1919 on the site of Champlin’s livery barn. And on the corner of Lincoln and Welch was the Champlin Building, which was the first brick building in Campustown when it was completed in 1909 and housed Champlin’s drug store and a social hall. Prior to the development of substantial on-campus services, these businesses served as the focal point of the community.

Today the Champlin Building is gone, but a couple reminders of it remain. A stone from the building’s façade sits in the lobby of the Kingland Building (at about the mid-way point of the building), embedded in the wall on the left-hand side as you walk in. People entering the drug store would have stepped across a floor tile that spelled out Champlin’s name; today this tile is on display in the Ames History Center in Downtown Ames.



Looking up Welch Avenue from campus, 1909
Photo courtesy of Dee Dreeszen

Women Suffrage Association during the fight to pass the 19th Amendment (which gave women the right to vote) and was also the founder of the League of Women Voters and the International Alliance of Women. In the last years of her life, Wilson became Catt's housemate and served as her secretary and the executor of her estate.

Among the many residents of the Cranford was Ada Hayden, a noted botanist and conservationist who was the first woman to receive a PhD from Iowa State. Hayden advocated for the preservation of Iowa's remaining natural prairies and today her name graces a popular lake and park on the north side of town.



Lincoln Way looking east from Welch, 1950s
Photo credit Ames Historical Society

10 – Kingland Building

Past the Cranford Apartments is another one of the newer developments that has reshaped Campustown. Completed in 2015, this structure holds a CVS pharmacy and retail spaces on the ground floor with offices on the floors above. The university is a major tenant in this building, with the second floor housing the Office of University Relations and the *Iowa State Daily* student newspaper. But this block has a long history, with the buildings on it once serving as the commercial anchor for the neighborhood.



Chamberlain & Welch in 1963, viewed from former Skelly Gas Station on the southwest corner (now Kum & Go)

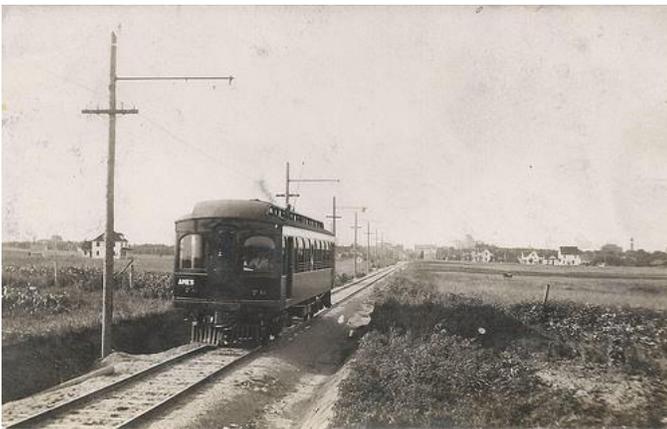
Photo credit Ames Historical Society

A set of stone benches sits on one corner of the intersection, giving you an opportunity to sit down and people-watch. During the day you're likely to see students walking to and from campus, lugging backpacks and preoccupied with schoolwork or their phones. Nighttime, on the other hand, often brings out noisy throngs of partygoers filtering through the liquor stores across the street, wandering in and out of one of the neighborhood bars, or grabbing something to eat from the food carts that regularly set up on the corner.

Welch Avenue's reputation for drunken revelry has also led to some recent infamy. In the early hours of April 9, 2014, a riot took place during VEISHA, an annual week-long celebration of student life at Iowa State. The rioters stampeded up Welch Avenue, overturned cars and toppled a pair of lamp posts on this intersection, one of which struck and seriously injured a person as it came down. The incident made national headlines and while the 2014 riot wasn't the first to take place during VEISHA, it turned out to be the last: in the aftermath of the incident, the annual event was suspended, a matter which remains a sore point for many locals.

5 – Chamberlain & Stanton

Continuing down Chamberlain Street, you'll pass many recently constructed apartment buildings surrounding the intersection of Chamberlain and Stanton Avenue. However, even in the midst of all this new development is an interesting reminder of the past. On your right as you approach Stanton Avenue are two triangular buildings separated by an awkwardly positioned driveway. The driveway doesn't serve either building, but rather leads into the parking garage of an apartment building down the street. Who would build something like this?



A Fort Dodge, Des Moines, & Southern Railway car approaching Ames, 1910

Photo credit Mrs. Ruth C. Jackson Collection

What you're looking at is a remnant of the Fort Dodge, Des Moines, & Southern Railway, an interurban railroad that ran between Fort Dodge and Des Moines with a spur line to Ames. Interurbans were basically electric streetcars built to handle traffic between nearby cities, and were once common across the Midwest. At this spot, the spur line cut diagonally across Campustown's street grid. From here it would have continued northeast through what is now the parking lot on the other side of the street, across the intersection of Lincoln Way and Lynn Avenue into campus, and onwards to its terminus in Downtown Ames. The train tracks were removed in the 1960s, but the

8 – Lincoln Highway

Lincoln Way derives its name from the fact that it served as a portion of the Lincoln Highway, the first transcontinental roadway across the United States. Designated in 1913, the Lincoln Highway was made up of a collection of dirt, gravel, and paved roads that spanned the nation between New York City and San Francisco. In Ames, Lincoln Way wasn't paved until 1921 and remained a two-lane road until the street was expanded to its current four-lane layout in 1963. The Lincoln Highway was replaced by our existing set of numbered U.S. highways in the late 1920s, but there's still a few old markers indicating the former highway; the closest one to Campustown sits about half a mile to the east, at the southeast corner of Lincoln Way and Beach Avenue.



9 – Cranford Apartments

On the far corner of Lincoln and Stanton is one of the oldest surviving buildings in Campustown. The Cranford Apartments were built in 1922 as an apartment building for female faculty of the university. Today it still serves as an apartment building as well as the home of Jeff's Pizza, a local pizza parlor that's popular with students.

The building was designed by Alda Wilson, a graduate of Iowa State who was an architect and a civil engineer at a time when those fields were overwhelmingly dominated by men. Wilson was also a close friend of Carrie Chapman Catt, a fellow alum of Iowa State and one of the most noted figures in the women's suffrage movement; Catt served as president of the National American



Lincoln Way looking east from Lynn, 1914
Photo credit Iowa Department of Transportation

7 – Lincoln Way & Lynn

This intersection marks one of the main entrances into campus and has seen radical change in recent years. The imposing building you're walking past is one of the newest in Campustown; it was finished in 2015 and currently holds a Starbucks and retail spaces on the ground floor with housing in the floors above. These buildings represent a significant change in the urban landscape of the block; prior to their construction, the buildings facing Lincoln Way on this block were much shorter and were separated by driveways and parking lots.

Across Lincoln Way on campus sits the Memorial Union, a major center of student life with its many services including a food court, an auditorium, recreational spaces and the university bookstore, which faces Lincoln Way. Lake LaVerne lies to the northwest, mostly hidden behind the trees across Lincoln Way. College Creek briefly reemerges as a short trench on the northwest corner of the intersection, carrying water from Lake LaVerne to another culvert under Lincoln Way; from here the creek continues east under Lincoln Way for about a block and then cuts across campus before ultimately emptying into Squaw Creek.

two triangular buildings remain on different lots to this day. When the large apartment building down the street was built, its owners secured the rights to use the space where the interurban used to run as a driveway for their building.

If you look northeast towards campus, you may notice another subtle (and likely unintended) reminder of the interurban: between the two residential buildings directly across the parking lot is a gap that lies approximately where the interurban would have run. Even though both of these buildings were built by the same developers, they too sit on different lots shaped by the interurban.

Continue downhill on Chamberlain Street, then turn left onto Lynn Avenue and proceed north.

6 – Lynn Avenue

Most of Campustown's streets are named for important figures from the early history of Iowa State. Welch was the first president of the university, Chamberlain was the fourth president, and Stanton served as a dean, the vice president, and acting president on several occasions. The origins of Lynn Avenue, however, are a little more dubious.

When this part of the neighborhood was platted, Lynn Avenue was originally referred to as Swamp Street, owing to the swampy terrain (as you may notice, Lynn sits downhill from Welch and Stanton Avenues). In the 1910s, the street was renamed to the more idyllic "Lynn", a derivative of the Welsh word for "lake". Around the same time, the artificial Lake LaVerne was constructed on campus near the foot of Lynn Avenue, so the name has turned out to be rather fitting.

Walking tour of CAMPUSTOWN

Ames, Iowa

Created in 2016 by John Perry



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CyRide bus stop
Campustown is served daily by the #1 (Red), #3 (Blue), and #6 (Brown) bus routes.

Public parking
Metered parking is available on most Campustown streets, but is in high demand; consider these public pay lots as an alternative if you can't find a spot on the street.

Bicycle parking
Bicycle racks are available at the Ames Intermodal Facility, on Welch Avenue, and at the Memorial Union. A pump/repair station is located at the Memorial Union racks. Note that bicyclists are not allowed to ride on the sidewalks on Welch and Lincoln.

Public restrooms
Most Campustown toilets require you to be a resident or a paying customer; the Ames Intermodal Facility and the Memorial Union have restrooms free for all to use.