

Will County

IL



**USA**

**STEGER**

**BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE**

*Presents*

**TOWN**

**76**

**MEETING**

**APRIL 3rd 9:00 - 5:00**

**ST. LIBORIUS HALL**

## HISTORY OF STEGER

Once known as the Piano Center of the United States, the Village of Steger located twenty-nine miles South of Chicago was platted by the Subdivider James Keeney in 1891 and given the name of Columbia Heights by which it was known until its Charter of Incorporation was issued in 1897, at which time it was given the name of Steger in honor of John V. Steger, owner of the Steger Piano Manufacturing Company.

The Steger Piano Factory was established here in the latter part of 1892 and began operation in January 1, 1893. The same year the firm of Rice & Macey opened a piano factory here but sold out to the firm of Smith and Nixon in 1894. They operated the factory until 1900 when they sold the business to Dr. Crawford, who operated the plant until 1902 when it also was purchased by the Steger Piano Company. The Steger Piano Company grew to be the largest of its kind in the world, reaching its peak during the years 1920 - 1922 and finally closing its doors in 1925.

In the early 1890's there was in Columbia Heights, a general store, Solomons, at the southwest corner of Steger and Chicago Roads, a hotel east of the railroad tracks and on the north side of 34th Street, owned by Henry Johnson. There was also a shoe repair shop and a notion store; the postoffice was in the railroad station near the hotel and later in the local barber shop.

There was another hotel in the Village at the northeast corner of Hopkins Street and Steger Road. It had been built in 1892 and was one of many constructed at this time to accommodate visitors to the Columbian Exposition to be held in Chicago in 1893. This hotel was converted into an apartment building but was destroyed by fire in the 1940's.

In 1905, the Interurban began operation of its street railway (down Emerald in Steger) which took passengers from Kakakee through to 63rd and Halsted. Residents in Steger could ride the trolley for \$.05 per adult and \$.03 per child. This operation was abandoned approximately 1929.

The Public School was first opened here in 1892 with a Miss Brown as the first teacher. School was first held on the second floor of a building at the northwest corner of 34th Street and Dixie Highway. Columbia School building was erected in 1902 and at this time consisted of four rooms. The Steger School building at Park Avenue and Richton Road was erected in 1911 - 1912 and the Central School building on west 33rd Street was built in 1929. Additional classrooms and a gymnasium were added in 1933 and six new rooms added in 1949. The Columbia and Steger Schools have been demolished and neighborhood schools built at four locations in this school district.

The First Congregational Church of Steger was organized in February of 1899; its first church building was located on East 34th Street but the present one erected in 1922 is at Halsted Boulevard and 35th Street.

The Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church and School were organized in 1899 and a church building and school erected two years later on Chicago Road north of 34th Place. The present Church building and parsonage were built in 1911.

The St. Liborius Catholic Church was established in 1901, the first building located at the southeast corner of 34th and Green Streets. The school was built in 1912. Their new church building is located at the corner of 35th and Halsted Streets.

The Steger Volunteer Fire Department was organized in 1894 with seven members but was reorganized in 1897 with thirty-two members. The first fire house was built in 1894 and a chemical engine drawn by hand was purchased in 1898. The department became a member of the Illinois State Firemen's Association in 1902. In 1912 a horse was secured to pull the apparatus. Other equipment was added from time to time, the first motor driven truck being secured in 1918 and a new pumper purchased in 1938.

The Police Department was established in 1896 with one officer. At the present time we have nine full-time officers, and twelve part-time officers.

HISTORY OF STEGER  
BY  
KENNETH A. PETERSON  
Chairman, Steger  
Bicentennial Commission  
1976

This is the year - the Bi-Centennial of our country - a time to reflect upon our past - enjoy the present - and plan our future.

I am a past to remember .....

I am a plot of land where Indians roamed mostly Pottawatomie Indians.

I was part of the treaty of 1832 and soon squatters came - Hiram Rowley, Jacob Heviland, Samuel Sloane, Henry H. Ayer and

I was settled.....

I am at the crossroads of two important trails - Sauk and Hubbard's

I was first called Dearborn Heights in 1891 but with the Columbia Exposition in Chicago my first real estate developer, James Keeney, quickly changed me to Columbia Heights - Columbia for the exposition - Heights because I was taller than my neighbors.

I became a dream when John Valentine Steger, a German Immigrant, came West from New York and settled in Chicago in 1873.

I came alive in 1891 when John Steger moved his small piano making business from Chicago to Columbia Heights on the land he bought from John Wilson whose family had been farming me since 1830.

I made pianos for years - the best pianos and became known as the "Piano Capitol of the World"

I changed my name to Steger and became a Village in 1896 with about 325 people.

I was now Steger, named for the man who sent music from me to the rest of the world.

I am 2500 people making 100 pianos a day

I am small businesses growing, serving, changing.....

I am sad, the automobiles and radio are taking people away from pianos

I lost my pianos, its 1922, but furniture, frocks and macaroni are coming along

I was a school above a saloon in 1892 and in 1905 became Dist. 194. Miss Esther Brown was my first teacher - my name was Columbia School then Steger School in 1911 and in 1929 I became Central School.

I became the Congregational Church in 1894, Emanuel Ev. Lutheran Church in 1896, and in 1901 I became St. Liborius Roman Catholic Church. Recently I became Pentecostal, Steger Bible Church and Baptist

I volunteered to fight fire - as early as 1894 with 7 members and have grown to over 40

I enforced law officially beginning 1897 to the now safe streets of today

I am a present to enjoy.....

I enjoy my parks and recreation program, my VFW, American Legion, Senior Citizens, Scouts, Kiwanis, and many other organizations.

I delight in my new library, churches and schools - My small businesses provide goods and services close to me.

I am the Steger VFW Post 8283 and Auxillary together with the Ill. 114th. Infantry Regiment providing a Bi-Centennial American Exhibit for me

I am a Bi-Centennial Commission.....

I am change and changing - from Indians hunting to farming settlers to piano makers to a suburban community

I am a native linking hands with newcomers to build my personality

I am adults helping children, bridging the gap of generations

I am today.....

I am a town meeting where citizens will suggest ideas for my future

I am a future to mold.....

I will be what you make of me

I challenge you

Yes.....I am special  
I am proud  
I am Steger, U.S.A.



*When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.*

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. . .*

*We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in general Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by the authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved; and that, as free and independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. And, for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour.*

*Declaration of Independence, 1776*



**CONSTITUTION  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES**

1787

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

**Preamble**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right to the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

**First Amendment [1791]**



# THE PRESENT CHALLENGES

**SESSION 1**







It is vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. The gentlemen may cry, Peace, peace! but there is no peace. The war has actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand here idle? What is it that the gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God. I know not what course other may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

**Patrick Henry**

What country before ever existed a century and a half without a rebellion? ...The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.

**Thomas Jefferson**

## THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

STEGER TOWN MEETING

APRIL 3, 1976

### CHALLENGE 1 SENTENCE

Issues not forced In the arena of economics, the following blocks, issues not presented - inadequate awareness, indicate the underlying contradiction of issues not forced. This is illustrated by local ordinances need updating. Guild A

### CHALLENGE 2 SENTENCE

Money?? In the arena of economic commonality the following blocks, fear of higher taxes, lack of new business, limited growth capacity of the Village, inadequate sewer facilities; indicate the underlying contradiction of public apathy and fixed incomes. This is illustrated by voting down streets and sewers; not attending Village Board meetings, great percentage of people are collecting social security, disability incomes or other retirement monies. Guild C

### CHALLENGE 3 SENTENCE

More comprehensive planning In the arena of economic growth the following blocks, older people on fixed incomes, limited job opportunities, need for more industry for higher local tax base, indicate the underlying conditions of need for more comprehensive planning. This is illustrated by working age youth movin, elsewhere, lack of tax income from industry, resistance of community for needed improvements thru tax increases. Guild D

### CHALLENGE 4 SENTENCE

Public Transportation In the arena of Public Transportation the following blocks; we must pay for RTA, but no benefits, and that some don't want busses going by house, indicate the underlying contradiction of need to depend on other towns for shopping and jobs. This is illustrated by going to RTA meeting and not being heard. Guild D

### CHALLENGE 5 SENTENCE

Citizen support & tax base In the arena of economic commonality the following blocks, apathy, lack of planning, lack of unity indicate the underlying contradiction of lack of citizen support and board support, loss of tax base. This is illustrated by 1. personal gain before community welfare; 2. Lost tax base. Guild B



## THE POLITICAL CHALLENGES

Steger Town Meeting

April 3, 1976

- CHALLENGE 1  
Political  
Commonality
- SENTENCE
- In the arena of political commonality, the following blocks, vandalism, public apathy, lack of voice in recreational facilities for senior citizens, village manager, and school teachers indicate the underlying contradiction of lack of parental guidance, community frustration, professional guidance needed, senior citizens not being aware of activities on their behalf. This is illustrated by lack of peoples' participation in community affairs. GUILD C
- CHALLENGE 2  
Poor City  
Management
- SENTENCE
- In the arena of city management the following block, lack of police enforcement indicate the underlying contradiction of poor city management. This is illustrated by loss of bowling alley and streets not fixed GUILD A
- CHALLENGE 3  
Political and  
Citizen  
Involvement
- SENTENCE
- In the arena of politics the following blocks, not enough manpower, community interest indicate the underlying contradiction of lack of citizen involvement. This is illustrated by insufficient community pride (debris in streets, cars racing in streets). GUILD B
- CHALLENGE 4  
Failure to  
Take a Stand
- SENTENCE
- In the arena of politics, the following block, failure to recognize issues indicate the underlying contradiction of lack of determination and dedication to take a stand and express oneself at town meetings. This is illustrated by no "city" garbage collection, enforcement of city ordinances, and failure to agree on installation of streets and curbs. GUILD C
- CHALLENGE 5  
Administrative  
Qualification
- SENTENCE
- In the arena of corporate order, the following blocks, inconsistency of Village Board, Zoning Board, and Police Board indicate the underlying contradiction of those who are unqualified for carrying out their duties and need specialized training. This is illustrated by the fact that the Edgewood Apartments were put up before people realized the implications of that dense transient housing. GUILD C
- CHALLENGE 6  
Participation  
and Better  
Communication
- SENTENCE
- In the arena of political involvement the following blocks, apathy and a lack of communication and understanding indicate the underlying contradiction of lack of participation of local residents. This is illustrated by a lack of attendance here today and at other community events and a lack of communication with the town's people by local newspapers. GUILD D

## THE CULTURAL CHALLENGES

STEGER TOWN MEETING

APRIL 3, 1976

### CHALLENGE 1 SENTENCE

Programs for parent awareness In the arena of cultural commonality the following blocks; lack of supervision and recreational facilities indicate the underlying contradiction of not enough programs to make parents aware of needs of children and what constitutes GOOD supervision. This is illustrated by loitering, vandalism, and poor attitudes. Guild A

### CHALLENGE 2 SENTENCE

Involvement In the arena of social structures, the following blocks, lack of general community interest, lack of recreational facilities, lack of interest in Senior Citizens, and Youth, indicate the underlying contradiction of economic pressures, peer group pressures. This is illustrated by vandalism, and lack of meeting centers. Guild C

### CHALLENGE 3 SENTENCE

Communication In the arena of community image, the following blocks of confused priorities and no time-line for government, indicate the underlying contradiction of people who don't have the social skills needed to make community plans for implementation of decisions. This is illustrated by junk cars allowed on lawns, trucks in residential areas, incompletd parks, general litter in the town. Guild C

### CHALLENGE 4 SENTENCE

Limited cultural participation In the arena of cultural communication the following blocks, lack of education and communication indicate the underlying contradiction of poor participation in attempting to solve the various problems. This is illustrated by sports only in Recreation (no Fine Arts); only one woman on Village Board, need for more individualized instruction in schools, Guild D



## THE CULTURAL CHALLENGES

## STEGER TOWN MEETING

APRIL 3, 1976

**CHALLENGE 5      SENTENCE**

Parental guidance & responsibility

In the arena of decision-making the following blocks, lack of

- (1) Law Enforcement
- (2) Youth Activities
- (3) Parental responsibility

indicate the underlying contradiction of parental guidance (lack of); this is illustrated by vandalism and low education level; parents not knowing where children are and lack of parental concern for youth.

Guild B

**CHALLENGE 6      SENTENCE**

**Social structures** In the arena of social structures the following blocks, unwillingness to get involved, lack of awareness on education, indicate the underlying contradiction of citizen participation. This is illustrated by non-attendance at Village Board meetings, School Board meetings, P.T.A., Recreation Board or Adult Education Courses. Unwillingness to stop youths in acts of vandalism or come to aid of others under attack. Failure to call for help when others property is being burglarized or destroyed. Guild B

# THE PRACTICAL PROPOSALS

**SESSION 2**







I must study politics and war, that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain.

**John Adams**



## ECONOMIC PROPOSALS

STEGER TOWN MEETING

APRIL 3, 1976

### FINANCIAL AID

We the citizens of Steger in order to get financial aid; propose writing Congress and Senators - also attend Village Hall meetings, through involvement and appointing leaders.

### DEAD TAX COMES TO LIFE AGAIN

We the citizens of Steger in order to use the tax structure for the future of the Village propose to investigate all tax incentive bases through employing qualified personnel.

### CITIZENS INTEREST

We the citizens of Steger in order to get people involved in the future propose to hold more public activities, through town meetings quarterly and by monthly newsletters on events.

### PROMOTING CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

We the citizens of Steger in order to promote more citizen-involvement in problem-solving; propose forming a citizen's committee to work with village officials, through canvassing homes for volunteers and input, forming necessary committees, forming inspection teams, block captains, reporting committees, and forming public relations committee.

### BRING IN NEW BUSINESS

We the citizens of Steger in order to bring in new business, propose available land and investors through title search and advertising.

## POLITICAL PROPOSALS

STEGER TOWN MEETING

APRIL 3, 1976

### BLOCK CLUBS AND CAPTAINS

We the citizens of Steger in order to show how the issues relate to the people and to get people of all ages to take responsibility for them, i.e.

1. Keep community clean
2. Watch finances
3. Better communication

propose Block Club and Captains; through

1. Individual and group participation and involvement
  2. Enforcement of existing laws
  3. Set advance date of meetings
  4. One person deciding to invite other block members.
- 

### CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

We the citizens of Steger in order to stimulate interest in local government issues propose attendance in town meetings, school board meetings, church organizations and local service organizations; through publishing a newspaper agenda of town meetings, church bulletins, and local radio announcements.

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### UPGRADING VILLAGE OF STEGER

We the citizens of the Village of Steger in order to create a more viable community propose a campaign of information and education through the creation of task forces for solving community problems.

## CULTURAL PROPOSALS

STEGER TOWN MEETING

APRIL 3, 1976

### AWARENESS

We the citizens of Steger in order to make parents aware of children's needs propose to set up ways to organize children through being aware as a parent for your own actions, and to make your child aware of his actions.

### DOOR TO DOOR CONTACT

We the citizens of Steger in order to get the message to the people propose a door to door campaign through;

1. Deciding on campaign issues
2. Training 100 door to door speakers.
3. Holding an (every door) canvas day.

### IMPROVE COMMUNITY CARE

We the citizens of Steger in order to create a structure to involve all citizens in community care, propose to set up a committee of representatives of all sub-groups of the citizenry through personal contact and invitation.

### VOLUNTEER SERVICES

We the citizens of Steger in order to increase significant engagement propose a clearinghouse for volunteer service through:

1. Donated Office space
2. Get retired Over-50's Club to staff.
3. Hold seminars on ways to use available talent.

### BEAUTIFY THE TOWN

We the citizens of Steger in order to create incentive thru tax deduction for completion of community projects, propose getting people involved by attending board meetings to get the project going through part time work and employing senior citizens.



# The New Story







I wish the bald eagle had not been chosen as the representative of our country; he is a bird of bad moral character; like those among men who live by sharpening and robbing, he is generally poor, and often very lousy.

The turkey is a much more respectable bird, and withal a true original native of America.

**Benjamin Franklin**





## THE STORY OF STEGER

### " A PAST TO REMEMBER - A FUTURE TO MOLD

In the past Steger was a self sufficient village depending on the Steger Piano factory. 2500 people were making 100 pianos a day.

In 1892 Columbia school was initiated above a salon with only one teacher within it. In 1922 the piano factory folded, but new hope arrived with the furniture, frocks and macaroni factories. The first church was founded in 1894 with other to follow closely behind. In the past the Police and Fire departments were all volunteer.

Presently Steger is a very active community with its various educational and social activities.

Educationally, School District #194 has provided its community with modern learning facilities and curriculum which includes co-educational sports, individualized instruction with specialized programs and Steger residents have proudly supported the schools financially as is evident in the fact that a bond issue has never failed.

Socially, the Police Department has demonstrated a positive approach to the youth of the community by sponsoring dances and social functions for them. In addition, there are programs such as the sanctioned Little League and the Steger "Big Red" recreational teams. Other activities include the Annual Homecoming sponsored by the Volunteer Fire Department and various service clubs and church activities.

Steger looks to the future with glowing optimism. Envision if you will our fully developed mid town shopping area with adequate and ample parking. A self sufficient area which will afford shopping and recreation in the same locale. The long range development of apartment complexes to house the elderly and young alike.

Look into our future and foresee a fully developed industrial complex which affords the local residents the job opportunities within the community and will allow their children to grow and remain involving residents.

Drive around your community and visit our fully developed parks where young and old alike are participating in recreational activities or just picnicing in the sunshine. Join us on Sunday morning at church - some old - some new - splash in our pool - visit our library - and finally when you look up at our fully functioning water tower - look with pride at the name STEGER and know in your heart this is the place I want to live.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR STEGER

We're on a journey into the future

To make each day a better day.

We're moving forward into tomorrow

Building together all the way.

For we are proud, and we declare it.

Let no one dare to put us down.

We're looking forward into the future

In Steger, our hometown.

Tune:  
"THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND"

What a glorious morning for America!

**Upon hearing the gunfire at Lexington [April 19, 1775**

**Samuel Adams**

Truth is on the march and nothing can stop it.

**Emile Zola**

Be always sure you're right--then go ahead.

**Davy Crockett**

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

**Martin Luther King, Jr.**



# STEGEER TOWN MEETING

# PARTICIPANTS LIST

APRIL 3, 1976

Robert Abraham  
10729 Ave. E.  
Chicago, IL 60475

John Arends  
3006 Wallace  
Steger, IL 60475

Dawn Arner  
3528 Ashland  
Steger, IL 60475

Stella Barris  
3209 Sangamon  
Steger, IL 60475

Marion Baron  
3725 Park Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Sherri Barrett  
28 West 37th. St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Jim Bitters  
3521 Morgan  
Steger, IL 60475

Pat Blissett  
3238 Florence Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Mary Jane Bloom  
3756 Crescent Drive  
Steger, IL 60475

Dave Beger  
405 35th. St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Leonard Bottando  
3626 Chicago Road  
Steger, IL 60475

LaVerne Buckley  
228 South Orchard  
Park Forest, IL 60466

John Budrick  
18921 Cedar Ave.  
Country Club Hills, IL

Frances Burkey  
911 Buell Avenue  
Joliet, IL 60435

Franklin D. Burkey  
911 Buell  
Joliet, IL 60431

Judy Butkus  
69 W. 34th. St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Ron Butkus  
69 W. 34th. St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Margaret Cameron  
3606 Peoria St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Mrs. Ronald Canali  
Oak Court, R. R. 3  
Crete, IL 60417

Dr. R. M. Carrabine  
Bloom Twp. High School  
Chicago Heights, IL 60411

Jeanne Carroll  
150 East 34th. St.  
Steger, IL 60475

A. M. Carson  
3448 Carpenter St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Joyce Carson  
3448 Carpenter St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Marlene Carson  
38 Forest  
Park Forest, IL 60466

Edith Cellini  
3044 Green St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Tony Cellini  
3605 Morgan  
Steger, IL 60475

Martha E. Chenard  
127 Interocean  
So. Chgo. Hts., 60411

Flora Ciarlo  
3420 Susan Lane  
Steger, IL 60475

Mari Jo Ciarlo  
3420 Susan Lane  
Steger, IL 60475

Michele Ciarlo  
3420 Susan Lane  
Steger, IL 60475

Angela Contreras  
2455 Apache  
Sauk Village, IL 60411

Shirley Contreras  
2455 Apache  
Sauk Village, IL 60411

Juanita Cooper  
34 West 37th. St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Russ Cramer  
9027 O'Day Drive  
Highland, Ind. 46322

Carmelita Curl  
3035 Union Avenue  
Steger, IL 60475

Anna Daniels  
3300 Enterprise  
So. Chgo. Hts., IL 60411

Vicki L. Darnell  
3403 Susan Lane  
Steger, IL 60475

Tony D. Lorenzo  
37 East 33th. Place  
Steger, IL 60475

Dorothy Dill  
334 Patricia Drive  
Chicago Heights, IL 60411

STEGER TOWN MEETING

Rev. John Doyle  
71 W. 35th Street  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Claude Duncan  
3517 Morgan Street  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Madge Dunn  
3412 Kings Road  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Mrs. R. Dunn  
546 W. 235 St.  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Mr. R. Dunn  
546 W. 235 St.  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Tom Dunn  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Shelly Durham  
3544 Halsted  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Donna Finnin  
256 Magnolia  
South Chicago Heights, Il. 60411

Chuck Fitzpatrick  
R.R. 3, Box 1214  
Crete, Illinois 60417

Ben S. Fletcher  
3760 Crescent Drive  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Judy Fletcher  
3760 Crescent Drive  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Wayne A. Franchi  
3325 Green Street  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Georgia Frey  
3338 Peoria  
Steger, Illinois 60475

PARTICIPANTS LIST

Irma Gardner  
3740 Stella  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Lura Grimes  
3744 Union, Apt. 4  
Steger, Il. 60475

Frank Gruberman  
3334 Halsted  
Steger, Il. 60475

Lillian Gruberman  
3334 Halsted  
Steger, Il, 60475

Nancy Kay Guigle  
20 West 35th St.  
Steger, Il. 60475

R. Hamje  
3444 Congress  
Chicago, Il. 60475

Henry Hartmann  
3447 Halsted  
Steger, Il. 60475

Marilyn Hartmann  
3447 Halsted Blvd.  
Steger, Il. 60475

John T. Harvey  
3325 Green St.  
Steger, Il. 60475

Gene Hefner  
3535 John St.  
Steger, Il. 60475

Jennifer Heldt  
3130 Wallace  
Steger, Il. 60475

Larry Heldt  
3130 Wallace  
Steger, Il. 60475

Janice Hicks  
Box 1198, R.R.#3  
Crete, Il. 60417

APRIL 3, 1976

William M. Hodge  
331 Tiverton Lane  
Steger, Il. 60475

Ella M. Hoffman  
3205 Green Street  
Steger, Il. 60475

Andrea Holecek  
3736 Sangamon  
Steger, Il. 60475

Audrey Honsbruch  
3204 Sangamon  
Steger, Il. 60475

Gilbert J. Honsbruch  
3204 Sangamon St.  
Steger, Il. 60475

Gloria Hussey  
3532 John St.  
Steger, Il. 60475

Linda Joyce  
347 Tiverton Lane  
Steger, Il. 60475

Helen Kaufman  
3412 Emerald Ave.  
Steger, Il. 60475

Lucy R. Klawitter  
3004 Chicago Road  
Steger, Il. 60475

Jack Knee  
3601 Chicago Road  
Steger, Il. 60475

RoDonna Knudsen  
227 Barbara Lane  
Steger, Il. 60475

Darlene Kraus  
3506 John St.  
Steger, Il. 60475

Peter M. Kraus  
3506 John St.  
Steger, Il. 60475

STEGER TOWN MEETINGPARTICIPANTS LISTAPRIL 3, 1976

Lois Lane  
3741 Crescent Drive  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Hattie C. Lauer  
3508 Halsted Blvd.  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Dorothy Lavelle  
3230 Florence  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Marie Leech  
97 West Richton Road  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Pat Leech  
97 West Richton Road  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Kim Luker  
3422 Butler  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Lewis F. Luker  
3614 Emerald  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Thelma Luker  
3614 Emerald  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Cathy Lynott  
3105 Euclid Drive  
South Chicago Heights, IL. 60411

Peggy Lynott  
3105 Euclid Drive  
South Chicago Heights, IL. 60411

Alan Maross  
3623 Union Avenue  
Steger, Illinois 60475

F. A. Martinez  
3105 Wallace Avenue  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Juanita Martinez  
3105 Wallace Avenue  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Carol J. Meade  
218 Christine Court  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Lawrence J. Micklos  
2737 White Oak Avenue  
Whiting, Indiana 46394

C. Montgomerie  
57 Elm  
Park Forest, Illinois 60466

Mrs. C. Montgomerie  
57 Elm  
Park Forest, Illinois 60466

Cathy Moore  
3428 Chicago Road  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Frank P. Pagoria  
King and Richton Road  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Mary Sue Paradiso  
3222 Hopkins Avenue  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Raymond Paradiso  
3222 Hopkins  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Kenneth A. Peterson  
3208 Phillips  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Marilyn Peterson  
3208 Phillips  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Kenneth Peterson, Jr.  
3208 Phillips  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Kim Peterson  
3208 Phillips  
Steger, Illinois 60475

Caroline Pfeifer  
29 West 33rd Place  
Steger, Illinois 60475



STEGER TOWN MEETINGPARTICIPANTS LISTAPRIL 3, 1976

Ralph Pfeifer  
29 W. 33rd Pl  
Steger, IL 60475

Bruno Poniatowski  
92 W. 37th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Carolyn Cunell  
113 McKinley Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Margaret Peif  
3222 Emerald Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Mrs. Arthur Rekau  
3530 Emerald Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Dianne Ruedger  
3108 Morgan  
Steger, IL 60475

Gene Salmen  
3213 Sangamon  
Steger, IL 60475

Norma Sherman  
3428 Carpenter  
Steger, IL 60475

Julie Smith  
3535 Ashland Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Christine Sotiroff  
#5 Northand Dr.  
Decatur, IL 62526

Charles Spellar  
3216 Butler Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Rose Spellar  
3216 Butler Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Mary Spinozzi  
42 W. 34th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Gail Sulski  
3532 Ashland Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Pat Sulski  
3532 Ashland  
Steger, IL 60475

Clifford Thompson  
3421 Lewis Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Charles A. Tieri  
116 McKinley  
Steger, IL 60475

Daniel E. Townsend  
11032 Albany  
Chicago, IL 60655

Maria Vitale  
3526 Halsted Blvd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Norma Vitale  
3526 Halsted  
Steger, IL 60475

Mary Walters  
3341 Commercial #21  
So. Chgo.Hts., IL 60411

Vera Wasik  
3203 Sangamon St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Brad Watson  
3409 Schulze Lane  
Steger, IL 60475

Adeline Wegrzyn  
3209 Sangamon  
Steger, IL 60475

Frank Wegrzyn  
3209 Sangamon  
Steger, IL 60475

Marcella Whitten  
3221 Morgan  
Steger, IL 60475

Milton E. Whitten  
3221 Morgan  
Steger, IL 60475

Paul Whittington  
3011 Phillips  
Steger, IL 60475

Sue Wilkening  
3757 Crescent Dr.  
Steger, IL 60475

Joan Wright  
3220 Phillips  
Steger, IL 60475

Chris Zelek  
3204 Phillips  
Steger, IL 60475

Diane Zelek  
324 Phillips  
Steger, IL 60475

Henry Zelek  
3204 Phillips  
Steger, IL 60475

Joe Zelek  
3204 Phillips  
Steger, IL 60475

Paul Zelek  
3204 Phillips  
Steger, IL 60475

Catherine Zirnow  
3200 Green St.  
Steger, IL 60475

STEGER TOWN MEETINGPARTICIPANTSAPRIL 3, 1976

Antoinette Bajick  
3132 Butler  
Steger, IL 60475

Clio Baker  
R#3 Box 1288  
Crete, IL 60417

Warner Bariye  
4750 N. Sheridan Rd.  
Chicago, IL 60647

Gail Baron  
3725 Park Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Colleen Bengtson  
78 Cedar  
Park Forest, IL 60466

Gretchen Benson  
4750 N. Sheridan  
Chicago, IL 60640

Catherine Bishop  
4750 Sheridan  
Chicago, IL 60640

Lavina Blissett  
3448 Morgan  
Steger, IL 60475

Ida Bova  
27 W 32nd St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Jackie Bova  
27 W. 32nd St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Vincent Bova  
27 W. 32nd St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Julia Brownfield  
27 E. 31st Pl.  
Steger, IL 60475

Harry Brownfield  
27 E. 31st Pl.  
Steger, IL 60475

H. Brownfield  
27 E. 31st Pl  
Steger, IL 60475

E. Buckley  
222 S Orchard  
Park Forest, IL 60466

Shirley Butler  
3752 Stella Blvd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Mary Callecod  
3212 Fairview  
So. Chgo. Hts, IL 60411

Guido Cellini  
3044 Green St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Lucy Chirumbolo  
3446 Florence Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Alice Claus  
3109 Green St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Rita Claus  
3433 Florence Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Ron Cocci  
205 Hereford Drive  
Steger, IL 60475

Harry Cole  
3106 Chicago Rd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Mrs. Harry Cole  
3106 Chicago Rd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Herminda Contreras  
23245 Wentworth  
Steger, IL 60475

Bob Cooper  
34 W. 37th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Mrs. R.C. Dairdeon  
22711 Woodlawn  
Chgo Hts., IL 60411

Mike DeLorenzo  
3104 Wallace  
Steger, IL 60475

Dorothy Demith  
3534 Carpenter  
Steger, IL 60475

Mary Ann Demith  
3033 Euclid Drive  
So. Chgo. Hts, IL 60411

Jeon Doss  
28 W. 37th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Elinor Dunn  
3712 Chicago Rd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Ruth Ennis  
4750 N. Sheridan Rd.  
Chicago, IL 60640

Rosie Fine  
30 W. 30th Pl.  
Steger, IL 60475

Chuck Ford  
1712 Dixie Hwy. Lot 235  
Crete, IL 60417

Kathy Goonan  
13 W. 36th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Imogene Gambell Green  
20 W. 36th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Barbara Greig  
3723 Green St.  
Steger, IL 60475

James Greig  
109 A Greenlee Rd.  
Troy Ohio

Mrs. Neil Greig  
17 W. 37th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Neil Greig  
17 W. 37th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Doris Harding  
R#3 Box 1259  
Crete, IL 60417



STEGER TOWN MEETINGPARTICIPANTSAPRIL 3, 1976

Ellis Harding  
Box 1259 Rt. 3  
Crete, IL 60417

Ella Hartmann  
3443 Halsted Blvd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Russell Healy  
3520 Morgan St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Barbara Herman  
3608 Union Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Joseph Herman  
3608 Union  
Steger, IL 60475

Rose Hernandez  
18 W. 37th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Wanda Jacobs  
3621 Sangamon St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Debbie Jasinski  
3017 Hopkins  
Steger, IL 60475

Reba Jasinski  
3045 Phillips  
Steger, IL 60475

Carol J. Kampe  
P.O. Box 75  
Steger, IL 60475

Frank Krause  
310 Durham  
Steger, IL 60475

Anna D. Leszyk  
140 W. Richton Rd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Michael J. Leszek  
140 W. Richton Rd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Marie Martin  
128 E. 34th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Tim Megraw  
4750 N. Sheridan  
Chicago, IL 60640

Kelly Michael  
4750 N. Sheridan  
Chicago, IL 60640

Linda R. Miller  
3120 Commercial  
So. Chgo. Hts., IL 60411

C. Minison  
3330 Florence  
Steger, IL 60475

Ethel Minison  
3330 Florence  
Steger, IL 60475

Liz Moser  
3134 Wallace  
Steger, IL 60475

Roger G. Mumford  
3610 Halsted Blvd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Mary Orr  
3446 Phillips Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Cecil Owens  
3502 Halsted  
Steger, IL 60475

Marcia Piacentini  
3423 Peoria St.  
Steger, IL

Sheila Pritchard  
3221 Dornell  
So. Chgo. Hts., IL 60411

Genene Raymond  
3206 Emerald  
Steger, IL 60475

Liz Reese  
4750 N. Sheridan  
Chicago, IL 60640

Bernice Sievers  
3443 Halsted Blvd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Edmund Sievers  
3443 Halsted Blvd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Robert Stokes  
524 Kent Ave.  
Crete, IL 60417

Carol Sullivan  
3209 Phillips  
Steger, IL 60475

Sharon Sylvester  
3517 Wallace  
Steger, IL 60475

Mark Tremble  
3120 Commercial  
So. Chgo. Hts., IL 60411

Eileen Vitelli  
3217 Phillips  
Steger, IL 60475

Dolores Voigts  
3316 Emerald  
Steger, IL 60475

Martin J. Waech  
3514 Wallace  
Steger, IL 60475

Tillie Weishaar  
171 W. 34th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Eleanor Witt  
3633 Sangamon  
Steger, IL 60475

Vickie Young  
3502 Halsted  
Steger, IL 60475

STEGER TOWN MEETINGPARTICIPANTSAPRIL 3, 1976

Ruth Poniatowski  
92 W. 37th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Ann Rauba  
328 Tiverton Lane  
Steger, IL 60475

Laura Rissky  
272 Dogwood  
Park Forest, IL 60466

Inga Schmidt  
3025 Peoria St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Walter Schmidt  
3025 Peoria St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Lorraine Slaveck  
343 Cass  
Crete, IL 60417

Carol Smart  
22915 Lahon Rd  
Chicago Hts., IL 60411

Mrs. W. Smart  
22915 Lahon Rd.  
Chgo Hts., IL 60411

Warren Smart  
22915 Lahon Rd.  
Chgo. Hts., IL 60411

Gretchen Stanicek  
118 Chestnut  
Park Forest, IL 60466

Nancy Tieri  
116 McKinley  
Steger, IL 60475

Ted Wasik  
3203 Sangamon  
Steger, IL 60475

Melissa Weckwert  
3117 Euclid Dr.  
So. Chgo. Hts., IL 60411

Juanita Wehrle  
265 Sauk Trail  
So. Chgo. Hts., IL 60411

Richard Willett  
3045 Peoria  
Steger, IL 60475

Todd Witt  
304 W. 34th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Robert Joyce  
347 Tiverton  
Steger, IL 60475

Donald Paradiso  
132 W. 34th St.  
Steger, IL 60475

DeAnna Kern  
3600 Peoria  
Steger, IL 60475

Carol Ann Butler  
3752 Stella Blvd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Emil Komer  
3625 Green St  
Steger, IL 60475

Al Primavera  
3626 Green St  
Steger, IL 60475

Sally Brown  
23351 Wentworth Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

M. E. Shields  
Rosedale Ter.  
Crete, IL 60417

Guy Diercouff  
11 Sangamon Court  
Park Forest, IL 60475

Charles Zamarocy  
3026 Peoria St  
Steger, IL 60475

Mrs. Fred Wann  
3128 Peoria St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Fred Wann  
3128 Peoria St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Marvin Dunell  
113 McKinley Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Paul D'Francisco  
3427 Chicago Rd  
Steger, IL 60475

Leda D'Francisco  
3427 Chicago Rd  
Steger, IL 60475

Mrs. Robert Stokes  
524 Kent Ave  
Crete IL 60417

Kent Bosworth  
1604 Rowell  
Joliet IL 60433

Casey Pierrocci  
1600 N. Roughton Rd  
Steger IL 60475

Rose Hefner  
3535 John St  
Steger, IL 60475

Louis Unger  
250 Hereford  
Steger IL 60475

V. Unger  
250 Hereford  
Steger, IL 60475

Carol Bosworth  
1604 S. Rowell  
Joliet, IL 60433

Wilford Bisping  
219 Hereford  
Steger IL 60475



STEGER TOWN MEETINGPARTICIPANTSAPRIL 3, 1976

Emil Zeman  
3122 Green St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Mildred Zeman  
3122 Green  
Steger, IL 60475

Carol Ziemis  
3570 Western Ave.  
Park Forest, IL 60466

Michael Balanow  
12 W. 36th Pl.  
Steger, IL 60475

Bobby Barnes  
3240 Sangamon St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Al Bitz  
3245 Halsted  
Steger, IL 60475

Daniel Bitz  
3245 Halsted St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Gloria Bitz  
3245 Halsted  
Steger, IL 60475

Kathy Bitz  
3245 Halsted St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Mary Ann Bitz  
3245 Halsted St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Susan Bitz  
3245 Halsted St.  
Steger, IL 60475

Herbert Bonds  
150 E. 225th St.  
Chicago Hts., IL 60411

Ruth Bonds  
150 E. 225 St.  
Chgo Hts., IL 60411

Linda Bustos  
150 W. Richton Rd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Mrs. DeFrank  
3524 Carpenter  
Steger, IL 60475

Jerome DeFrank  
3524 Carpenter  
Steger, IL 60475

Judi Demith  
3534 Carpenter  
Steger, IL 60475

Heather Ewers  
3510 Williams  
Steger, IL 60475

Phyllis Ewers  
3510 Williams  
Steger, IL 60475

Charles Fajman  
3320 Emerald  
Steger, IL 60475

William Francis  
3752 Sangamon  
Steger, IL 60475

Josephine Gorski  
343 Cass  
Crete, IL 60417

Mrs. W. L. Hass  
107 Warwick  
Park Forest, IL 60466

Christine Hauser  
3418 Florence Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Betty Hess  
3436 Sally Dr.  
Steger, IL 60475

Nathan Jewell  
4750 N. Sheridan Rd.  
Chicago, IL 60640

Joy Kosmalski  
3217 Green  
Steger, IL 60475

Pat Kratovil  
186 Susan Lane  
Steger, IL 60475

Bob Lanphear  
4750 N. Sheridan  
Chicago, IL 60640

Ann Marthaler  
22940 Sherman Rd.  
Chicago Hts., IL 60411

Nea Mathews  
3045 Chicago Rd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Roy Mathews  
3045 Chicago Rd.  
Steger, IL 60475

Catalina Mendez  
93 W. 34th St  
Steger, IL 60475

Richard Gestmann  
192 Barbara Lane  
Steger, IL 60475

Dennis Pelock  
117 McKinley Ave.  
Steger, IL 60475

Janice Pelock  
117 McKinley  
Steger, IL 60475

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

STEGER TOWN MEETING

APRIL 3, 1976

The following companies, organizations, and individuals have devoted financially or in the form of materials, services, or their personal time to help make Steger Town Meeting '76 a success. The Task Force of the Steger Bicentennial Commission wishes to thank them for their kind assistance.

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Steger Kiwanis  
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Bozo's Hot Dogs  
LaVerne Buckley - Supplies  
Linda Joyce - Supplies  
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Elmer Joyce  
Charles Tieri  
Jean Carroll  
Marian Heine  
Richard Lean  
Dr. Roberts  
Charles Fitzpatrick  
Steger Flower Shop  
Red Lion  
Over 50 Club  
Tom Dunn  
Plaza Stationary  
Wally Tokarz

ENTERTAINMENT

Central Junior High School Concert Band

George Cizek, Conducting

Central Junior High School Chorus

Ted Griffin, Conducting

Debbie Talab, Dramatic Reading

Light Weight Cheerleaders

Heavy Weight Cheerleaders

PIANISTS

Judy Fletcher

Betty Hess

SONG LEADER

Frank Pagoria

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS

Helen Kaufman

Linda Joyce

Hattie Lauer



TOWN MEETING 76 COMMITTEES

Andrea Holecek, Co-ordinator

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Andrea Holecek  
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Gene Hefner  
Al Carson  
Larry Darnell  
Kenneth Peterson

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Nancy Guigle  
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Marilyn Peterson  
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Juanita Cooper  
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Henry Dankert  
and  
Members of the  
Over 50 Club

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Casey Ciarrocchi, Co-chairman  
Elmer Joyce  
Tony Cellini  
Tom Baron  
Wally Tokarz  
Earl Bloom  
Roger Mumford

STEGER TOWN MEETING

APRIL 3, 1976

ORGANIZATORS: The Institute of Cultural Affairs  
Dr. Ken Gilbert  
Marian Hamje

WORKSHOP LEADERS: Sandra True  
Dan Townsend  
Richard Hamje  
Shirley Heckman

CONSULTANT: Richard Lear

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Dr. M. Ray Whitten, Supt. of School Dist. 194  
Mayor Louis Sherman  
Village Clerk: William Hodge  
Village Attorney: Franklin Burkey  
Trustees: Vince Bova  
Marcia Piacentini  
Gene Hefner  
Don Paradiso  
Milford Bisping  
Louis Bianconi

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Ben Fletcher

You have driven me from the East to this place, and I have been here two thousand years or more....My friends, if you took me away from this land it would be very hard for me. I wish to die in this land. I wish to be an old man here....I have not wished to give even a part of it to the Great Father. Though he were here to give me a million dollars I would not give him this land....When people want to slaughter cattle they drive them along until they get them to a corral, and then they slaughter them. So it was with us....My children have been exterminated; my brother has been killed.

**Chief Standing Bear of the Poncas**



AMERICAN REVOLUTION  
BICENTENNIAL  
1776 - 1976



*Steger Bicentennial Committee*



WE SALUTE  
USA '76