

OUR COMMUNITY

Before it became known as the obscure little village of Posen, Illinois, it was the Town of Bremen, settled mostly by farmers of German extraction that located in the northeastern part of the Township of Bremen. It is located 20 miles southwest of Chicago's Loop. The early settlers whose names appear in the Tract Book in the County Recorder's Office were Schwartz, Peetz, Ziebell, Muehler, Wetzel and others.

These settlers were hard working, middle income families who preferred the quiet and security of a small town rather than the hub-bub and helter-skelter of a big city. Its residents are a proud group, undaunted by the magnitude of neighboring towns, content within their own minuteness. Posen has come a long way, both socially and economically, since its founding in 1887 and its incorporation in 1900. It is indeed a community of "Peace, Pride and Progress".

The area that would later become known as Posen began as a broad stretch of unbroken prairie and farmland. Brennan Highway, which is now I-57, is the Indian Boundary Line. This was the trail the Indians used to travel from Starved Rock to Lake Michigan; they would site the hill in Blue Island at Grove Street, and it was called Blue Sky, which in Indian is Blue Island and how they got their name. Countless wildlife and birds were the main inhabitants, few humans, if any, would come across this land and think of it as anything more than a continuation of the fields and farms that were a large part of this young prairie state. This attitude of insignificance, the quiet undisturbed region would be loved and appreciated by all those who have known it at one time or another.

It was not until 1887, when the Columbian Exposition was being constructed for the 1892 Worlds Fair to be held in Chicago, that two subdividers recognized the potential for development in the area. Two of these were James J. Smith and Company, who subdivided a farm between 144th Place to 146th from Kedzie Avenue to Albert Avenue, now Richmond Avenue, and A. G. Spaulding Company, who subdivided a farm from Division

Street to California Avenue, between 143rd to 145th Place into 25-foot lots. James J. Smith sold his lots mostly to the construction workers on the Columbian Exposition and others, while A. G. Spaulding and A. T. McIntosh, his successor, publicized and sold mostly to immigrants of Polish extraction. Later Robertson and Young subdivided the Peetz farm from 145th Place to 147th Street, from the old Chicago-Vincennes Road (Western Avenue) to California Avenue into various sized one to five acre lots for small farms. Some of the early buyers of land settled immediately, while others followed in the early 1890's. The Polish immigrants were anxious to come in search of freedom and better housing. The area was convenient for them, as they were employed in factories within walking distance of Harvey and Blue Island, as few rode the inter-urban electric street cars to Chicago. These pioneers were a close-knit and hardy lot. They had left Poland in search of a better life for themselves and their families and were determined to reach that goal.

Soon after those first families settled here, they appealed to the Chancery Office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago to establish a Catholic church in their settlement, for these Polish immigrants wanted and yearned for a church of their own in their adopted land of America. Their impassioned plea was acknowledged and Father Serafino Cosimi was delegated and assigned to establish the St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr Parish. He was welcomed with warmth and open arms, for he was the answer to their prayers.

Reverend Father S. Cosimi played a significant role in the incorporation of the village. He urged the settlers to incorporate, in fact he even went house to house circulating the petition for the incorporation. After eight years of pleading and wrangling with Hans August Peetz, a large landowner who wanted the village to be named after him, acceded to relinquish his name in favor of the name of Posen and a promise by Father S. Cosimi that he would become the first Village President. Accordingly, the petitions were filed sometime in September or October with the Cook County Election Department and Cook County

Judge Carter set the election for incorporation for December 29, 1899.

The boundaries of incorporation were beginning at the corner of Chicago-Vincennes Road (Western Avenue) thence south along the Chicago-Vincennes Road to the Indian Boundary Line, thence northeasterly along the Indian Boundary Line to a point of true Western Avenue, thence south along true Western Avenue to the center line of 147th Street, thence west to the center line of Kedzie Avenue, thence north along the center line of Kedzie Avenue to the William Potts Farm at approximately 144th Place, thence east along 144th Place to the center line of California Avenue, thence north along the center line of California Avenue to approximately 142nd Street, thence west to the center line of Kedzie Avenue, thence north along the center line of Kedzie Avenue to the center line of Rexford Road, thence northeasterly along the center line of Rexford Road to the center line of 139th Street, thence east along the center line of 139th Street to the point of beginning, 139th and Western Avenue. The election for incorporation carried and the results of the election were announced as in favor and were sent on to Springfield for the legislator's approval and signature of the Governor, which were finalized and signed by the Governor on September 9, 1900, when we officially became a village. In the interim Father Serefimo Cosimi was appointed acting President and the Board of Trustees was comprised of Hans August Peetz, Jacob Bulczak, Joseph Gierszewski, Serafin Kaja, Frank Rohweder, and Frank Mech. It was not until April 16, 1901 that the election for president and trustees was held.

The first legally elected officials were President Hans A. Peetz, Village Clerk Joseph Smuczynski, Trustees Joseph K. Wiecorek, Henry Reimer and Joseph Bolda, Police Magistrate John Jasinski. Appointed as Village Treasurer was Adam Grzadzinski, Policemen Otto Peetz, Serafin Kaja and Jay Warren and Special Policeman Martin Reske.

The name of Posen was selected because of the majority of immigrants at the time were from in and around Poznan (Posen), Poland, in the Polish corridor.

Elected to the office of Village President were:

in 1903 Frank Budnik

in 1904 John Jasinski

in 1906 John Jasinski

in 1908 Hans Peetz (passed away 3-1-09)

in 1909 Frank Mech

in 1911 Frank Mech

in 1913 Frank Mech

in 1915 Frank Mech

in 1917 Henry Peetz

in 1919 Henry Peetz

in 1921 Frank Mech, Sr.

in 1923 Frank Mech, Sr.

in 1925 Victor Suk

in 1927 Victor Suk

in 1929 Victor Kaminski

in 1931 Victor Kaminski

in 1933 Victor Kaminski

5/8/34 Martin Filipiak appointed to unexpired term

in 1935 Martin Filipiak elected Village President

in 1937 Victor Suk

in 1941 Victor Suk

in 1945 Victor Suk

in 1949 John Sendera

in 1953 John Sendera

in 1957 John Sendera

in 1961 Joseph Smaron

in 1965 Joseph Smaron

in 1969 Joseph Smaron

in 1973 Joseph Smaron

in 1977 Joseph Smaron

in 1981 Joseph Smaron

in 1985 Jerry Kuznieski

When Victor Kaminski was elected to his third 2-year term in 1933, the following year in 1934, a birthday party was given for him at the A. Z. Hall at 144th and Division. During the party he received a phone call to come to Testards Tavern at 147th and Western; his brother Pete, the Chief of Police, begged him not to leave his guests, but Vic went anyway, where he supposedly met his death. Some say he was hit over the head from behind with a blunt instrument and placed in the former Mrs. Testard's car and hauled to 159th and Brennan Highway, where she ran the car into a ditch and said he bumped his head on the dashboard and was killed, but that was questionable because there was no mark on his forehead where he supposedly bumped his head. A few weeks later Mrs. Testard's daughter by her previous marriage to Mr. White, who was a possible witness that night, started to talk; several weeks later she was burned to death.

In the early years of the village, elections were bitterly contested by the candidates as can readily be seen by the changes of mayors every 2 or 3 years. Gradually as the village grew in maturity and the terms were changed to 4 year terms, the candidates seemed to serve longer.

In those early years the A. G. Spaulding and Company devised an advertising gimmick calling "the Village of Posen the only polish village in the U. S. A. \$5.00 down and \$1.00 per week buys a lot in the beautiful town of Posen, Illinois, the Home Spot of the Calumet District". Potential buyers flocked to the area and lots sold like hot cakes in the only exclusive Polish city in America. One of the main salesmen at the time was Ladislaus Hayman and Frank Mech, Jr. was his Number 2 salesman. Their office was located on the west side of Western Avenue, north of the Grand Trunk Railroad. This was the same Mr. L. Hayman who was the elected Police Magistrate and had his court located in the McIntosch and Company office, which was the successor to A. G. Spaulding. In those years the law was that all traffic had to stop for the railroad crossing. Judge Hayman used to hail the traffic that did not stop for the crossing into his courtroom and fined

them for the violation, sort of a kangaroo court, until 1921 or thereabouts, when the Chicago Motor Club revealed this kangaroo court. Mr. L. Hayman left town and hasn't been seen or heard from since. When Posen had a village meeting following this scandal, Posen did not want to have anything to do with the patrolling right to Western Avenue.

In 1923 the Village of Specialville was born by petition and election (later to become Dixmoor). The big instigator for the formation of this village was Charlie Special, who with Alfonse (Scarface Al) came to this area from Brooklyn as bodyguards for Tim Thompson, the crime syndicate boss of the south side of Chicago to Kankakee, between Gary, Indiana and Will County. Charlie Special had a real estate office on the east side of Western Avenue across the street from the Roamer Inn, also known as the White House located on the west side of Western Avenue at 14422. It was known as a house of ill fame. The manager for Tim Thompson was Polish and catholic. He would wake the girls on a Sunday morning for them to go to mass, regardless of their religion, whether catholic or not. If they did not want to go, he'd horsewhip them and made them go. The other homes of similar fame in those days were the ones operated by the Everleigh Sisters on 21st and Dearborn and the State Line Saloon on Plummer Avenue on the State Line in Hammond, which later became Calumet City, Illinois.

The area was ideal for development because it had the Inter-urban Electric Street Cars from 63rd and Halsted to Kankakee. The route was from 63rd south on Halsted to 82nd thence southwesterly along the Rock Island Railroad on Vincennes Avenue to Burr Oak Avenue, 127th Street thence one block west to Western Avenue, thence on Western Avenue through Blue Island to the south side of the Grand Truck Railroad, thence southeasterly along the south side of the Grand Truck Railroad to Page Avenue in west Harvey, thence south on Page Avenue to 154th Street, thence east on 154th Street through Harvey to Park Avenue, thence southwesterly on Park Avenue to 159th Street, thence east on 159th under the Illinois Central Railroad viaduct to the east side of said railroad, thence south and southeasterly to the west side of Halsted at approximatel

167th, thence south along Halsted to Chicago Heights, Steger, Crete and Kankakee, the end of the line, thence back to 63rd on said route. They had their car barn at 84th and Vincennes.

Most of the employment was within walking distance, in Specialville and west Harvey. Others used the Interurban Electric to industrial Chicago and all along the Interurban Line until 1928, when the line went bankrupt. That is when the Safeway Bus Line came into being as a means for transportation in the south suburban area, and the automobile was becoming popular in those days, from the Model T to the Model A and so forth and so on.

When Father Cosimi predicted in the early years of struggle that Posen will become a growing prosperous community, he understood its needs. The first was a church to thank the good Lord for their good fortune. The St. Stanislaus Church, a tall, sturdy wooden structure complete with rectangular bell tower high above the roof top, was proudly dedicated in 1893 at 14418 McKinley, with a two story frame building housing two classrooms downstairs and a rectory upstairs on the second floor at 14414 McKinley Avenue. A few years later a sister's convent was provided at 14416 McKinley which was later sold and moved to 14525 Campbell Avenue. Since those early days, the church and rectory were razed and replaced with modern structures. In 1926 an eight classroom brick structure had replaced the original two classroom frame building, which too has been razed and since replaced with modern new classrooms and gymnasium, a modern new convent, a new circular church and new up to date modern rectory. All of these structures cover a full city block, 600 feet plus parking and portable classrooms across the street which covers 200 feet including playground.

The original public school in the area was erected somewhere between 1870 and 1880 at 139th and Cleveland Avenue as a country school, a frame two story building with two classrooms for all eight grades. Its students were from the farms located in this northeast section of Bremen Township, from 135th Street to 147th Street, between Division Street and Kedzie Avenue. This school was the first school in the township for

which it was named, the Bremen School. Each room was individually heated by a large wood and coal fired boiler standing in one corner of the room. It was discontinued and sold in the late 1950's and later the Posen Fire Department razed the building in their fire drill in 1967.

In 1920 the village fathers realized the need for additional educational facilities and requested more classrooms. The School District 143, comprising the villages of Midlothian, Posen and Robbins, purchased 2 1/4 acres at 14520 to 14546 Harrison to California Avenue and erected a two classroom brick structure in 1921, adding a second floor in 1926 with two more classrooms. In later years additional classrooms and a gym were built in the late 1940's on California Avenue, now known as the Posen Elementary School. In 1950 the John (Gordon) Grzadzinski School was built between 141st and 142nd on Harrison Avenue and in 1960 the Otto Ziebell School at 149th and Rockwell was built. The village now has three public schools, one catholic school, three park sites, a community center, a new village hall and fire station, a public works building and water reservoir. The village has a sanitary and storm sewer system, paved streets with curbs and gutters, concrete sidewalks and bituminous surfaced alleys.

The first police were appointed in 1901 after the election. The Posen Volunteer Fire Department was established in 1906 and their first fire station was the Joseph Bolda barn at 144th and Sherman Avenue, by the alley at the southwest corner of the lot. In 1917 George Willman was the first appointed police marshall. Up to this time, they were only appointed as special police in the respective order of their appointment; in 1918 Fred Hock, in 1919 Harry Powers, in 1920 Thomas Hartigan, in 1921 Victor Suk, in 1922 Edward Suk, in 1923 John Sawicki, in 1924 B. Leo Dryja, in 1925 and 1926 Louis Rudziewicz, in 1927 Louis Rudziewicz was appointed the first Chief of Police, in 1928 Louis Rudziewicz, in 1929 Peter Kaminski, in 1930 Peter Kaminski was appointed as police marshall, and in 1931 and 1932, in 1933 Peter Kaminski was again appointed as police chief, then in 1934 and 1935, in 1937 Gustaf Turngren, in 1939 Joseph Czekalski, in 1941 Joseph Chekalski, in 1947

Stanley Rzepa, in 1948 John Sendera, in 1949 Andrew Steczo, in 1967 John Sarna, Sr., in 1972 Raymond Powers, in 1974 William Hamilton, in 1976 John Sarna, Jr., in 1981 Randy Wolf, in 1983 Mary Ann Gratkowski and in 1985 John Sarna, Jr.

The Posen Volunteer Fire Department Chief in 1906 was Frank A. Kossak with 15 volunteer firemen. The equipment consisted of a hand drawn push cart type wagon, extension ladder, 6 rubber buckets, coiled fire hoses mounted on 2 wooden spoked wheels, with an ax and iron crow bar securely fastened. At the sound of the siren, two men would rush to grab hold of the handles similar to those on a horse drawn wagon, while others got behind pushing; in this way the fire wagon was hauled to the scene of the fire. There are many times the rumor has been that John (Bausch) Miller was the only one pulling the wagon. Often, when the fire was a good distance from the station, the firemen were so tired when they reached the fire, that the fire was so far gone that it was beyond saving. Also hindering their action was the lack of city water. They had to rely on wells, cisterns and open ditches for their water supply for their hand manned pumper. The department was new, the men lacked experience and the facilities were inadequate. In 1908 the Fire Department moved into its own station built on 144th and Campbell. There, the Fire Chief with his volunteers, would hold their meetings around a pot bellied coal stove many a winter evening. The structure was a one room frame building with a tower in front with a siren. In 1910 Frank A. Kossak was replaced as chief and succeeded by John Zimny, in 1912. Frank A. Kossak was reappointed Fire Chief, in 1917 Stanley Zimny was appointed chief, in 1924 Walter Zimny, in 1974 Ted Konuszy, in 1979 Al Czachura, in 1980 John Zawisza, and in 1983 John Krizik.

In 1911 the addition was built onto the Fire House for the new Village Hall. In the early years, cement sidewalks were rare. Along 144th Street were boardwalks, while the rest of the streets had cinder walks until 1923 when cement walks were installed. Roads were cinder ash or mud, with open ditches. Along Western Avenue ditches were as

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deep as 6-feet with wooden bridges. When the floods came in the spring, the boys would use the bridges as rafts and go crab hunting in the ditches and creeks along Western Avenue, 140th along the Grand Trunk Railroad and 151st Street. In 1926 the water mains were installed; that is when the northwest section, from 141st Place to 139th, between California and Kedzie was disconnected from Posen and annexed to Blue Island. In 1928 the sanitary and storm sewers were started and were not completed until 1933 or 1934 due to the depression. The streets of Posen once again became Mudville, until the W.P.A. completed them with canal rock from the Blue Island Canal. In those early years, when we had the boardwalks, the village appointed the first kerosene, then later the gas lamp street lighter, Martin Jaworski in 1908. His successors were Spekta, Millers and Kara, until 1925 when the electric street lights were installed. In 1910 telegraph lines were installed and shortly thereafter the telephone poles, telephone usage became common throughout Posen, mostly the four party lines. Anne Sekerka, Josephine Sekerka, Frances Kaminski and Rose Dryja were some of the early Hello Girls from Posen.

This virgin prairie land of Posen had no sewers until 1929, relying on open ditches for surface water drainage and outhouses as latrines. Our drainage of the sanitary sewer is down Harrison to 139th, then to California, then north on California under the North American Car Shop to the interceptor sewer on the south side of the Blue Island Canal.

Posen got its first mechanized fire equipment under Chief Stanley Zimny in 1919, a Model A. Ford 500-gallon per minute pumper fire truck. Gradually, through an annual Thanksgiving Eve dance and turkey raffle, funds were raised for additional equipment for the fire truck.

As Posen prospered and grew, so did the business establishments, especially saloons (dram shops) or now known as taverns. Along Western Avenue and 144th Street, some of the early saloons were John Kaja's Dixie Gardens at 139th and Western (Dixie Highway), Del Fosse's Gardens at 143rd and Western, north side of Grand Trunk Railroad, the Roamer

Inn (the White House) at 14428 South Western Avenue, Peetz's Saloon (later Jim Testard's) at 147th and Western Avenue, Joseph Bolda (White Eagle Hall) at 144th and Sherman Avenue, John Cerekwicki (John Cristies Hall) at 144th and Campbell Avenue. After these originals, many more began to open and prosper, so the village fathers had to establish a limit. The Dixie Gardens were famous for polka picnics, Del Fosse was known for week long weddings. White Eagle Hall and Crist's Hall for weddings and dances, Peetz's was a saloon and distributor of barrel beer for all these events as well as their famous homemade hard salami (German variety). Later on, along came Mech's Saloon and A.Z.'s Hall and Saloon and the rush was on, for there was no closing law in those days and the customers would come from all over Chicago and as far as the end of the Kankakee line for weekends. Meat and bakery peddlers making deliveries to local stores were called solicitors and were licensed at \$15.00 per truck or delivery unit. I remember the Posen Bakery operated by Josphe Czajkowski and Walter Wozniewski. Joseph did most of the baking while Walter helped in the bakery. Then early in the morning, while still half asleep, made home and farm deliveries of bakery goods. They were famous for their rye bread. A Clarence H. Geist constructed and operated his own Posen Gas Works. He piped Peoples Gas Company lines to Posen from Blue Island. He also subdivided farmland on 139th Street as C. H. Heist's Subdivision. One of the early main industries in Posen was the Swift Company Stock Pens where the Continental Concrete Pipe Company is now located. When cattle and hogs were shipped by rail to the Chicago Union Stock Yards, they were unloaded from the long trip to be fattened up before going to slaughter. It was rumored that in those days there were rustlers roaming this very spot we now reside in.

There were about half a dozen or more country stores which were famous for something special to offer and gather to wile the time away. One such store of a pioneer family was the Casimir and Peter Borys Store at 14412 Blaine Avenue. Casimir, the eldest, used to ride the Inter-urban Street Car early in the morning to 63rd and then the Chicago Sur-

face Line on Halsted to the Union Stock Yards for fresh meat for the next day. He would come back home by the same route with a load of four large packs of meat, one on each shoulder and one in each arm, arriving back about 4:00 P.M.. With their sister and brother-in-law, Lawrence Janeczek, they worked hard throughout their life and prospered until late in 1970 when the store closed and a link with the past was forgotten. Another store was Roman Matuszonek's, opening his first candy store where the Posen Bakery was. He then built his own store on the corner of 144th and Sherman Avenue, where he continued to cater to the children in his candy store. He was a tailor by trade, pressing and tailoring. Later his wife Josephine opened a notions store and crochet circle. Roman also provided all sorts of medicines and pills, such as cough syrups and aspirin. Later he opened the first Posen Post Office. In the late 1920's he opened a tavern which he operated until his poor health forced him to retire. Another neighborhood gathering place for the people to gather every first Thursday of the month was the Open Air Market (Flea Market) on Western Avenue and 144th Street, where the Chicken House now stands. The Jewish merchants from Maxwell Street came out with their goods and the farmers would come with vegetables, cattle, hogs, goats, geese, ducks and chickens, provision companies with all kinds of sausages, fruit peddlers and egg farmers. Those were the days when people came from all over and it was a joy to meet someone you have not seen since you left the old country some 20 or more odd years ago.

One of the major pastimes of the eligible young bachelors in those days were the benches at the side of the taverns, when young girls passing by made sure they made it their business to pass by along 144th Street. You could hear the howling and whistling, boy! oh! boy! and make googly eyes at the girls.

Most of the entertainment was on weekends, dancing at the A.Z. (Zwijacz Hall) at 144th and Division Street, a combined dance hall and saloon. Eligible males from all around came to these dances, which oftentimes would lead to wedding bells, settled here and raised their

families.

Many of the early weddings were of a real festive variety, with a procession to the church singing the bride's family name, that their daughter is getting married, all the way to the church. Many a time the festivities were held at the bride's home with a variety of polka waltzes, krakowiaks and hops. The celebration would last for several days, many for a full week. Well, you know in those days it was until death do us part.

As the families multiplied, new families moved into Posen, more classrooms were needed. That is when the Harding School was built and named after President Harding. In those early days, the teachers made it a point to visit each student's family to discuss the student's progress, ability for improvement and also to get acquainted with the family. This was one of the reasons the community had such a close knit family environment.

Some of the reasons Posen is not very proud of: Tim Thompson's White House (Roamer Inn), Charlie Special and Alfonse (Scarface Al) Capone, his body guards, the murder of Paul Matlocha in front of Testard's Tavern in 1924 or 1925, the murder of Stanley and Ann Rzepa in 1947 or 1948 in front of their home at 14441 Sherman Avenue.

The various moonshine stills operated by the Chicago Heights Syndicate located at the following locations: 14304 Harrison, 14309 Blaine, 14615 Harrison and 14519 Albany Avenue, which were raided during the 1931 village election. The still at the Green Villa operated by Sparrow and attended by F. Lipinski blew up, and when the Posen Volunteer Fire Department came back from that firefighting encounter, their fire truck was overloaded with 5-gallon cans of uncut alcohol. Boy, what a ball.

It was not known why John Matlocha lost his life, was it mistaken identity by the syndicate hit men or did he talk too much about them when he hung out at Testards? Why was Stanley (Pep) Rzepa and his wife Anna waylaid and gunned down gangland style in front of their home as they were returning home at 4:00 A.M. Sunday after closing the Green.

Villa in November, 1947? There were all kinds of rumors and stories written about them in several magazines and publications, each seeking to cash in on the monetary gain at the time. Some of the stories were muscling in on the syndicate, kidnapping Jake (Greasy Thumb) Guzik, fireworks concessions and the floor shows at the Green Villa. Then there were such names as Gink and his buddies, who also disappeared shortly thereafter, were the reasons for what had happened. No one knows. On February 20, 1923 the disreputable house of ill fame lit the sky with a towering inferno of flame and was completely consumed. All that remained was a rubble of ash. It was a sight to see, the 30 or so scantily clad clients of the inn came rushing out into the night into the arms of the police. The proprietor of the house was convicted of kidnapping a young girl, Viola Barris, for being forced into prostitution by a false ad for a housemaid.

During the W.P.A. days in the mid 1930's the sewer system was completed and the streets were improved. In 1941 a new developer, John S. Jurik subdivided and built new homes from Sacramento to Kedzie between 146th and 147th Streets that was the revitalization of Posen. Then in the 1950's a new regime took over with more new developments and annexations south of 147th and the boom was on.

The person most responsible for the new interest and growth of the community was Reverend Father Stan Rozak, a catholic missionary priest who came to St. Stans Parish in 1941. He preached to the parishoners to tear down their fences, for if they must have one, then let it be the one in the alley, cut down your old willow and poplar trees and replace them with new and more beautiful saplings. He beautified the old church, built a new convent, a new school and gym. He got the people turned around, they began to beautify their homes, their gardens were something to see, with blooming flowers, bushes, shrubs and trees. The village was revitalized, it sparkled and its people were so proud of their accomplishments.

It was in 1950 when ground was broken for the new village hall and fire station. At the same time of the corner stone laying, the

village held its 50th Anniversary of incorporation. At the dedication the Honorable Cook County Judge Edmund K. Jarecki was the principal speaker, congratulatory telegrams were read from the President, Governor, senators and congressmen, former mayors Victor Suk and Martin J. Filipiak were introduced, as well as the present mayor, the Honorable John J. Sendera, the entire Board of Trustees Edward J. Jankowski, Michael J. Tokarz, Paul A. Sled, Mike Surufka, Walter J. Sumowski and Chester F. Wiatrowski, Township Committeeman, Township officials, visiting State representatives, visiting neighboring village officials and many other visiting dignitaries. It was a beautiful day for the parade through the village to the carnival grounds at 147th and Western to the original farm of Hans August Peetz, the first village president.

When I became Village Clerk in 1945, the population was approximately 1798. In 1961, when John Sendera left office, the population was close to 6100. The village was booming with many new industries settling here. Many more industries came later, but the population diminished. I believe the reason was that the old timers had larger families, when the children of these families married off, they moved to new neighboring communities and our population decreased in 1980 to around 4350. Now it is prospering once again. All in all it is a wonderful homey and friendly community located in a strategic location or crosstown of easily accessible I-57 and Route 294. When you get on the expressway in Posen, you can make direct connection with any state in the Union including the Alcan Highway to Alaska, except the Island State of Hawaii.

Under the present administration of Village President Jerry Kuznieski and the new Board of Trustees, a new outlook of friendliness seems to have appeared and the village seems to be sprouting new wings as if it is ready to take off and reach out for the better things in life for the village.

What I remember best about Posen, Illinois when I arrived in August, 1924 riding atop a stake body truck, with my brother Joe's two wheel bicycle tied upside down atop the furniture thereon, people were

standing on the wooden walk in midtown beside John Cerekwicki's Saloon and Hall laughing at what they saw. I believe they thought it was funny.

We moved upstairs at 14434 Blaine Avenue. Barney Dryja had a pool room downstairs which was George Swiatkowski's Barber Shop previously. I remember John Giers putting a cue ball through the plate glass window. I remember Agnes Zielke's wedding reception with her husband J. Jaskowiak and also Monica Cerekwicki's wedding reception with Marion Gurzynski. Both were at John Cerekwicki's Hall. I remember going to the Ziebell's apple orchard farm for apples. Grandma Ziebell, mother of Otto and Ewald Ziebell came out and picked a bushel of apples for me for a quarter. I remember when my sister Virginia was born and we had a christening; her Godmother Vicki Balkota and her husband came here in a touring car and they got stuck in the mud on 144th and Blaine Avenue. My Dad had to get Mr. Zuziak with his team of horses to pull them out. I remember the hotly contested election of 1925, when Felix Mech and Lulu Bulczak had a fight over the results and the two handfulls of pennies Bob Peetz tossed out in the street for us kids, boy did we scramble for those pennies at Roman's Candy Store. I remember my first dance sponsored by the Związek Polek (Polish Ladies Society), it was the Pączki dance in 1928, because after this dance I ended up with double pneumonia.

I remember Frank Ratka shimmying up the village flagpole to replace the halliard. I remember the installation of the first cement sidewalks on 144th Street by Black Construction Company of Riverdale, then later they were installed throughout the rest of Posen proper. I remember when the water system was installed and then the sanitary and storm sewers and how they were not completed because John Pizza the contractor went bankrupt. They were finally completed by the W.P.A.

I remember my youth when we hung out at Roman's combined candy store, ice cream parlor, notions, over the counter medication, sewing and crochet club, post office and lastly the tavern, Sunday's card playing hangout.

The parties we had nights at 144th and Western's Lone Tree. How a car ran into the ditch there, it was so deep that the rooftop was even with Western Avenue.

I remember the original route of the Blue Island Mailman from Blue Island down Western to 139th Street, then to Rexford Road, down Kedzie to 145th, then down 145th to Harrison to 144th, then down 144th to Western, then down Western back to Blue Island.

How well I remember W. Otto Wielgorecki, the attorney who represented Posen and was responsible for saddling Posen with all those special assessments. In fact, he controlled the book of vouchers against the first installment and wrote vouchers at random. I also remember Vincent J. Biskupic real well, he was the attorney who took the fee for spreading the special assessments #8, #9 and #10, which belonged to George D. Gilley, the attorney who really did the work. He was also known as the attorney who represented Posen in a lot of unnecessary court cases. He took the village for a lot of exorbitant fees.

I remember a certain politician who pulled out a roll of bills, waved it in front of my nose and said, "Krygowski, there is plenty more where this came from." I also remember a certain village official who went to Iowa and purchased some special assessment sewer bonds and had them paid illegally by the treasurer and blamed an innocent special assessment collector for taking them in for payment. Despite all of these happenings of dishonesty and falsehood, the village has survived and is that much the better for it. We have come a long way.

Sometime in the early 1930's our congressman, at the time Kelly, had sponsored Posen for its own post office at Roman's building at 144th and Sherman and Ann Madejczyk became our first postmistress. Then Jean Zettergren became postmistress and the post office was moved to 14418 Campbell. After the 2nd World War, a veteran Benny Ejdynt became postmaster and once again the post office was moved to 14418 Palmer. Then Joseph Sawicki became postmaster and the post office was moved to a new structure built for the post office at 2716 West 147th Street in 1961.

In 1957 the Bremen Township Rooster was born in Don Moore's office, who was the attorney for its corporation. The majority of the major stockholders were from Posen. Several years later they purchased land at 147th and Richmond Avenue and began their own publication, changing the name to the News Record. The news covered all of Bremen Township as a weekly newspaper. In the late 1970's it sold out and shortly thereafter the new owners folded. In 1960 the Posen Times, a bi-weekly, relatively village newspaper was born, but it did not last long. Then the Penny Saver became the local township newspaper, plus the Blue Island Sun Standard, Harvey Tribune and the Suburban Marketeer.

After all the progress and improvements in the 1960's, the village fathers started their own modernization program. In the 1970's a new police and fire department and village hall were erected at 2440 West 147th Street, together with modernizing and building the civic center at the old village hall site at 144th and Campbell Avenue through a federal grant of \$499,000.00. The police and fire departments and the village offices were moved to their new quarters in 1973. A new garage and maintenance building was erected on the water reservoir site at 149th and I-57.

Posen is rich in traditional history, many Posenites can trace their ancestry to Posen's first pioneers. It is a real U.S. town comprised of a proud people of Polish, German, Italian, English, Irish, French, Russian, Czech and many other nationalities, for after all, we are all brothers under the skin. We are now proud Americans with a common bond for good old Posen, "Peace, Pride and Progress". We all like to go visiting the other states of our great country, the foreign countries of our forefathers, yet we cannot wait 'til we get back to our home, good old Posen in the U. S. A., our Home Sweet Home.

By: Bernard Krygowski
Village Clerk
5-01-45 to 4-30-57

Typist:

Therese Kuznieski