

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue ~ Vol. 12 No. 1

July 2015

carol jean smetana, editor

Mission Statement:

Promote the historical significance, enhance the beauty, and preserve the artistic heritage of Bohemian National Cemetery

Vision:

Create an appreciation of BNC in local, national, and international audiences



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What's New with Friends of BNC

A pile of crumbled cement was what you saw in May in place of the crematorium/columbarium steps—the first item in replacing them. People coming to Memorial Day events climbed the stairs inside the building as we awaited the finished stairway. The cement for the stairs is mostly in place but the finishing is still being completed, including the railings. Do come to see this new improvement, paid for by your generous donations and a grant from the Czech government.

We are ready for hot weather when we host summer events in the



Pouring of the foundations for the Eastland Memorial that will be dedicated on July 12. See page 5 for more information.

gatehouse, thanks to the portable air conditioner Friends has provided. It rolls into place and is fastened to a hose that goes out one of the north gatehouse windows. If you were at the August celebration in 2014, you know that a little coolness would have been most welcome!!

Our grant for curriculum materials to introduce children to BNC was the basis for hosting first the **T.G. Masaryk Czech School** children and many of their parents. (See "Live from BNC" for details about their visit.) In May about 50 children from

(continued on page 3)

Live from BNC

The cemetery was very busy throughout the months of April, May and the early part of June, used by many different Czech organizations for different types of activities. On April 25th, a group of 50 children, parents and teachers from **T.G.Masaryk Czech School** in Cicero, Illinois, came to the cemetery for an Arbor Day planting, with trees provided by Gethsemane Gardens. This is the school's third annual field trip to Bohemian National Cemetery. Despite the rainy, cold weather, the children still managed to plant the trees. They also

visited the crematorium/columbarium building, where **Andy Bultas** explained that it was built to accommodate different types of services for the customs of different religions and nationalities, and that, since Bohemian National Cemetery is non-denominational, everyone is welcome. The group also visited the Cermak mausoleum and the location where the *Eastland* Memorial will be placed. After talking a bit about the disaster, the teachers, **Irena Cajkova** and **Klara Moldova**, had the children locate

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Heritage Happenings

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Manuscripts, articles, photographs, and advertisements for *Heritage Happenings* may be submitted to carol jean smetana, 167 County Road A4A, Sapello, NM 87745-5026 or emailed to her at editor@friendsofbnc.org.

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from the editor's laptop

I love my mountain home in rural New Mexico, but sometimes I wish I could teleport myself to Chicago. This is one of those times: how wonderful it would be to attend the dedication of the new Eastland Memorial at the cemetery. The idea of erecting a memorial to the victims of the Eastland at

Bohemian National Cemetery was first suggested at a meeting of the BNCA board in the month following the disaster. It took 100 years and the vision, leadership and hard work of Chuck Michalek to turn that idea into reality. The new Eastland Memorial will be the first place I will visit next time I'm in Chicago.

Just two days after the disaster, the Denní Hlasatel editorialized: "Tens of years will pass before the 'Eastland' catastrophe will cease to be a topic of conversation. Let us see to it that while it is such a topic it should always call to memory the Bohemians' love for their countrymen. It should always recall the way in which we have proved to be members of the same large family in which there are no selfish wretches but only loving, generous brothers and sisters."

The Eastland Memorial at BNC will keep the conversation going and be a reminder of how the community pulled together in the face of great disaster.

Na shledanou!
carol jean smetana

Friends of BNC Summer Meeting Sunday, August 16, 2015

Our summer meeting this year promises to be a memorable event. We will hold our annual elections: Evelyn Krenek Fergle, who serves as our Nominations Chair, reports that all our current officers will stand again for election. As always, nominations from the floor will also be welcomed.

What is the first historic monument that comes to your mind when you think about the city of Prague? Is it Prague Castle? Wenceslas Square? Charles Bridge? Pavlina Dropka, the head Czech language instructor at Sokol Spirit, will present a program centered on the massive rock that, according to Alois Jirásek's "Old Czech Legends," established the fame of Prague. Vyšehrad stands today in the shadow of Prague Castle, perhaps because it looks ordinary at first glance, maybe because it is

located outside the main Prague historic route, which lies mostly in Old Town and New Town. However, Vyšehrad is one of the most beautiful treasures that Prague has to offer. It was on the rock of Vyšehrad that the legendary Princess Libuše proclaimed, "I see a great city whose fame will touch the stars." It was here that the Přemyslid dynasty established their residence. The castle might be blown away in ruins, but St. Martin's, the oldest rotunda in Czech Republic, built in the 11th century, and the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, rebuilt in the 19th century, are still standing. Vyšehrad not only offers one of the best and most romantic views of Prague, but is also the final resting place for notable figures from Czech history, including artists, writers, musicians and politicians. The presentation will also touch on Vinohrady Cemetery, the burial place of Vaclav Havel and site of Strasnice Crematorium, the largest in Europe. Mention will also be made of St. Vitus Cathedral, the final resting place of many Bohemian kings, located within the walls of Prague Castle.

Finally, we will have a special unveiling of the plaque Friends of BNC bought to commemorate the listing of Bohemian National Cemetery on the National Register of Historic Places. Join us at 1:30 pm on Sunday, August 16th, in the cemetery's Ceremony Hall for an afternoon of delightful and informative activities.

What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)

Palmer School in the neighborhood walked over to BNC and were given a tour of the grounds and crematorium/columbarium building by **Rob Charlemagne**. They enjoyed Czech pastries as part of learning about Czech culture, and focused on all the symbols found on the monuments. We are also going to be doing a program on Czech culture and BNC at the Albany Park Branch Chicago Public Library in the fall.

Although there is not a contest for plantings at the cemetery this summer, as was true a few years ago, we still have some for Friends, thanks to **Mary Syrup** and **Arline Artist**, who redid the bed in front of the gatehouse and also in front of the Cermak Mausoleum. With all the rain we have had in Chicago this spring, the plants are doing great!!

Don't miss the picnic on July 12th and especially the dedication of the *Eastland Memorial* beginning at 1:00 p.m. in Section 16. The usual wonderful Czech potato pancakes and other food, our book table, and live music will make this a great afternoon.

Our meeting on Sunday, August 16th at 1:30 p.m. in Ceremony Hall will feature **Paulina Dropka**, a native of the Czech Republic and head Czech language teacher at Sokol Spirit, who will present an illustrated talk on

"Vysehrad, the Oldest Prague Jewel and More." Perhaps we who love BNC can especially understand designating a cemetery as a "jewel." Vysehrad is the final resting place of people like Antonin Dvorak and Bedrich Smetana. High on a hill, it is most impressive. We will also learn more about burial practices in the old country and how they differ from ours. Free and open to all—bring your friends!

We are excited about having the Moravian Cultural Society dancers as our entertainment for the FallFest Gala on September 13th. Look for more information on FallFest on the back of the newsletter. You'll be receiving your invitation later in the summer, so save the date and be sure to join us.

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Welcome to Our New Members!

- Lee Breezee** ... Lewisburg, TN
- Susan Dyer** ... Winfield, IL
- Jerry A.Kolar** ... Gurnee, IL
- Joseph & Jennifer Kolar** ... Libertyville, IL

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

Sunday, July 12th ~ BNC Annual Picnic ~ noon to 4 pm with dedication of *Eastland Memorial* at 1:00 pm

Enjoy live music, potato pancakes, sausages, bakery items, and our Friends book table.

The new *Eastland Memorial* will be dedicated at 1 pm.

Visit www.friendsofbnc.org/eastland for information on donations or purchasing a brick.

Sunday, August 16th - Friends Summer Meeting at BNC

1:30 pm in Ceremony Hall

Paulina Dropka, Sokol Spirit head Czech language teacher, will present a program, "Vysehrad, the Oldest Prague Jewel and More," a look at some of the cemeteries in Prague.

Refreshments served after meeting and program. Free.

Saturday, October 10th ~ Tours of the Tombstones at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 pm led by Albert Walavich



“EASTLAND” AND “LUSITANIA”

An editorial from Denní Hlasatel, July 28, 1915

There are two names that will forever remain entered in bloody letters in the history of ship catastrophes of the year of 1915, this year full of horror, sorrow, and misery: “Lusitania” and “Eastland.” The first denotes the utmost in barbarous warfare; the other, the utmost in barbarous greediness of capitalism.

Both these catastrophes have profoundly shaken human souls all over the world, in spite of the fact that people's feelings were deadened by the news of the terrible events taking place day by day, hour by hour, on the bloody battlefields of Europe. In both of these catastrophes, hundreds of innocent, helpless human beings were sacrificed to the insatiable, bloodthirsty god Moloch, but the “Eastland” catastrophe is much more tragic and shows our civilization in a much more repulsive light than the “Lusitania” disaster.

When the “Lusitania” was leaving New York harbor last May, it carried, in addition to some fifteen hundred or more passengers, among whom were about two hundred Americans, a big load of ammunition in its cargo. She belonged to a nation which is at war with Germany, whose submarines have been waging a destructive campaign against the shipping of all Germany's foes.

At first, the submarines governed themselves according to the rule which required the giving of a warning to the people on board. But when the British Admiralty — interested much less in the saving of human lives than in the cargo aboard the ships — offered prizes to vessels for the sinking of submarines, the submarines changed their tactics. They started

sinking enemy vessels without warning. All this was well known to the American passengers, most of whom were going to England to negotiate new contracts for delivery of ammunition against Germany. Not only was all this well known to them, but they had also been warned that the “Lusitania” would be sunk. Now, we do not wish to discuss the question whether Germany had the right to sink the “Lusitania” or not. All we wish to do is point to the fact that there were about one hundred American citizens who were on their way to England on a mission inimical to Germany in its nature, even though, formally, strictly neutral. Furthermore, they were in a position to avoid the threatening danger.

But just the same, the sinking of the “Lusitania” created a situation that threatens to put us into a terrible war with Germany. The United States Government maintains — with full right — that the lives of American citizens must be safe on the seas, that is, insofar as their safety depends on human actions. Germany must not be tacitly conceded the right to change at will the international laws, to violate the rights of neutral states with the excuse of the exigencies of war. But if we are to protect and defend the safety of our citizens aboard ships against a foreign nation so emphatically that we are almost ready to wage war because of the loss of lives of some hundreds of American contractors, then it would seem infinitely more logical to protect the lives of our citizens against pirates who ply their trade right in our midst, to protect their lives against criminals, as the owners of the “Eastland” have proved to be.

The thousands of men, women, and

children going out for recreation, presumably in absolute security, had not been warned that the ship might be attacked by some uncanny, eerie horror; the “Eastland” was not sailing into enemy waters; did not carry any war contraband in her cargo. The simple, harmless excursionists had no greedy aims on their minds when they were boarding the ship that was to become their grave. But, nevertheless, their doom was more certain than that of the passengers of the “Lusitania”.

Fifteen years ago, in Bar Harbor, the “Eastland” had had the same misfortune that cost some fifteen hundred lives last Saturday. The mere accumulation of passengers on one side of the vessel was enough to cause it to keel over. Anybody who knows anything about ships and sailing will tell you that such an accident is caused by faulty construction of the ship, and this was the case in this instance. According to the law, the center of gravity of a fully loaded ship must be seventeen inches below the water level. But in the case of the “Eastland”, the center of gravity was only two inches below the water level. It is easy, therefore, to understand why the ship keeled over so readily, particularly since the Government inspectors, now accused of accepting bribes from the owners of the “Eastland”, had issued a license for the steamer permitting it to raise the safe number of passengers more than two hundred. This same vessel, in Cleveland, prior to its arrival in Chicago two years ago, was forbidden to carry passengers at all; such was the opinion of authorities concerning it in a city which is not so completely dominated by money interests as Chicago.

All that, of course, was very well

known to the owners of the “Eastland”, who collected dividends from this deathtrap, and who alone are responsible for the terrible disaster that has brought sorrow and distress into hundreds of Chicago homes. Their responsibility is clear but here in America, alas, that does not necessarily mean that they will suffer the punishment demanded by the outraged public opinion. Of course, there will be strict and severe investigations, hearings, adoption of resolutions, proposals, suggested laws; but there is little hope that the real culprits, the owners of the vessel, and the company sponsoring the excursion which forced its employees, on pain of discharge, to participate in the excursion, will ever be punished.

In fact, already, while many, many of the victims are still buried in the dismal hull of the ship, attempts are being made to whitewash the real perpetrators of this crime. State’s Attorney Hoyne has tried to secure the

documents necessary for the investigation. But, to the great astonishment and surprise of the authorities and the public, it has become known that the Chief of Police had passed on these documents to District Attorney Clyne, that is, to a Federal official. It is quite evident that this is an attempt to protect the Federal inspectors responsible for the condition of the “Eastland”.

Many other nasty things are coming out into the daylight. For instance, the son-in-law of the chief inspector of ships in Chicago, Erickson, was appointed chief engineer on the “Eastland” immediately after the company owning the ship had been given permission to take on board several hundred passengers more than safety would permit. It is a clear case of criminal graft accepted in spite of the risk of hundreds of lives which, as it so happened, now really have been lost.

Everybody will understand the reasons why we call those who attacked and

sunk the “Lusitania”, barbarians. But before we cry out demanding their punishment, let us get rid of worse vermin right here at home. The war will end one day, and there will be no sinkings of “Lusitanias” in peace, but catastrophes such as that of the “Eastland” will recur with the same dreadful regularity as peace-time catastrophes in mines, on railroads, in factories, if we do not put a stop to the savage greediness of big business that values dividends above everything else, and hundreds of human lives not at all.

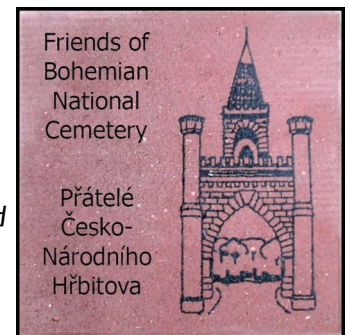
Editor’s note: This editorial was written only four days after the disaster, before details could be verified, but it conveys the strong emotional reactions of individuals and the community in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy. For an accurate explanation of the Eastland disaster, what happened and why it happened, check out Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic by George Hilton. This translation is from the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, published in 1942 by the Works Progress Administration of Illinois and made available by the Newberry at flps.newberry.org.

Update on Eastland Centennial Commemorative Project

The last few weeks involved a flurry of activity for the Eastland Memorial at BNC. The foundations for the granite pieces have been poured, many of the engraved donor paver bricks have arrived from Florida, and several committee members recently viewed the preparation of the granite pieces at the Bevel Granite Company. If you are on Facebook, check out Eastland Memorial Project at Bohemian National Cemetery to view pictures of the construction process. Even though the actual capsizing of the Eastland took place on July 24, 1915, we will dedicate the memorial at 1 pm on July 12, during BNC’s annual summer picnic. BNC’s picnic, ironically, is a fitting time to dedicate the memorial as the passengers on the Eastland were on their way to a much anticipate picnic across Lake Michigan. Hope you can join us for this memorable event.



The site of the Eastland Memorial in mid-June. A bench will be placed on the front foundation facing a ship’s wheel rising out of a stone representing the river, which will be on the middle foundation. An upright stone on the rear foundation will provide information. The paving bricks purchased by individuals and organizations to support the erection of the memorial will cover the ground from the river stone to the area around the bench. At right is the design of the Friends brick.



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**Thank you all for your
generosity.
Your donations help
preserve and restore
Bohemian National
Cemetery.**

Live from BNC



(continued from first page)

headstones of victims. The field trip was enjoyed by all.

On May 16th, **CSA District #12 Council** held their annual Join Hands Day at the cemetery. Eleven CSA lodges and 35 people came to clean the grounds, the crematorium/columbarium building, and the administration building. The CSA volunteers picked up and bagged trash and piled fallen branches by the roadside for later pick-up by cemetery personnel. Columbarium niches were dusted and cleaned, as were the office, flower room and back kitchen area in the administration building. The CSA volunteers did a great job.

On May 22nd, Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery and their volunteers placed American flags throughout the cemetery in preparation for Memorial Day, ensuring that the cemetery looked

great for the upcoming celebration.

Rain on Memorial Day did not prevent the services from proceeding. After coffee and kolace in the gatehouse, the participants formed a parade to march to the Ceremony Hall. Sokol **Spirit Color Guard** posted the Colors, placing the Czech, Slovak and American flags on the stage. The Czech, Slovak and American National Anthems were sung. **Angie Bultas** gave the welcoming address in both Czech and English. Three students from the T.G. Masaryk Czech School—**Sebastian Hanulik, Veronika Hernandez** and **Sivan Knafo**—led the audience in the pledge of allegiance and also recited a Czech poem. Klara Moldova of the Czech School played a violin solo. The Czech speaker was **Kristyna Driehaus** and Alderwoman **Margaret Laurino** was the English speaker. **Ed Slavik** accompanied all the service songs on his accordion. The **Odd Fellows** services were

also held in the Ceremony Hall because of the rainy weather.

On May 31st, about 50 persons participated in Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery's Tour of the Tombstones. **Albert Walavich** led the tour and was outstanding as usual in his presentation.

On July 12th, the annual Bohemian National Cemetery picnic will be held. This year, in addition to the picnic, the *Eastland* Disaster Memorial will be dedicated in Section 16. Come and see the excellent work **Chuck Michalek** has done on this memorial.

As you can see, many organizations and people enjoy Bohemian National Cemetery for many different reasons. You too can enjoy the cemetery. Just come out and walk around—you will see many wonderful sights.

Andy Bultas
Vice-President

Děkuji vám!

Preparations on May 22nd for Memorial Day:
CIT rail volunteers for preparing the flowerbed by the gatehouse
Gardeners **Mary Syrup** and **Arline Artist** for planting the flowers by the gatehouse and in front of Cermak's mausoleum

Memorial Day flags placement:
CIT Rail volunteers including **Amy Michalec**
Jerry Gaydusek
Chuck Michalek
Juli and Pat Nelson
Jim Trnka

Memorial Day:
Martha and Chuck

Cervenka for hosting the refreshments provided by Friends

Installation of new air conditioner in gatehouse:
Jerry Gaydusek
Chuck Michalek

Visit of TG Masaryk Czech school students:
Andy Bultas for organizing the visit
Rob Charlemagne for serving as host in the gatehouse and at the crematorium/columbarium building

Visit of Palmer School students:
Rob Charlemagne for serving

as tour guide of the grounds, including the crematorium/columbarium building

May 31st tour:
Chuck Betzold for advertising sign for fence
Martha & Chuck Cervenka for refreshments

May 31st tour check-in and book table hosts:
April Hasson
Art & Kathryn Lorenz
Juli & Pat Nelson
Mary Syrup
Roland Weiss for checking in funeral directors in attendance

*Friends of Bohemian
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Heritage Happenings

we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



Don't miss our *FallFest Gala* on
Sunday, September 13, 2015, at 12:30 pm
at elegant Ashton Place in Willowbrook, Illinois.
The energetic Moravian Cultural Society dancers,
dressed in their beautiful kroje, will entertain us.
You will have a choice of delicious entrees, with wine and beer included,
and a chance to bid on unique items in our popular silent auction.
Watch your mail in August for your invitation!