

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue ~ Vol. XIV No. 1

July 2017

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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Another Grant from the Czech Republic!

The Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic has awarded a grant of \$3800 to Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery to be used for the ongoing tree trimming and removal project at the cemetery. With an additional \$1000 from Friends and preparation and clean-up work supplied by volunteers, this grant will pay for SavATree to work another day at the cemetery (see previous issue) to remove and prune other trees that have been identified as dangerous hazards.

We are grateful for the Czech government's continued support of our mission.



Dome Roof Will Be Repaired in 2017!



Work Is Underway

A Major Step Towards Weatherproofing the Historic Crematorium/Columbarium Building

by Chuck Michalek

Friends of BNC's Columbarium Restoration Project achieved a major objective this past month when work began on the long awaited dome roof repair and restoration.

As described in the July 2014 edition of *Heritage Happenings*, Friends hired a preservation architect to assess Bohemian National Cemetery's historic 1913 crematorium/columbarium building in order to identify and prioritize steps for weatherproofing it. Commissioning a detailed master plan was necessitated when leaks were observed originating from the dome area and exterior side walls, forcing Friends to suspend further restoration of the Ceremony Hall's interior decorative wall painting.

Recommendations from the report indicated several significant areas requiring immediate attention: the dome/roof area; the exterior limestone walls, which had significant crumbling and cracks in the building's limestone ledges, lintels and vertical surfaces; and the front terrace and steps (because the crumbling stairs and loose

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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

The monsoons have arrived in the Southwest. I woke up yesterday to a heavy, steady rain, and I found myself reflexively checking the ceiling, looking for signs of leaks. But I had a new roof installed five years ago and nary a problem since. The crematorium/columbarium roof and building are significantly more complex than my small rectangular home with its simple peaked roof, but the roof repairs described in this issue's lead article are a significant and long-awaited step on the road to weather-proofing the historic building. Stay tuned for progress reports and more information on additional needed repairs to restore this beautiful 100-year-old building.

Researching the Spikings family, I was struck by their longevity genes: William Spikings was heralded as a pioneer and recognized several times in the Tribune for holding the record as having lived the longest in the same residence. I also marveled at how many generations remained within close proximity to the homestead: when William and his wife Minnie celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1924, the newspaper noted that four generations of the Spikings family resided within a few blocks of the home at 4853 North Crawford Avenue (now Pulaski Road).

If my family enjoyed Spikings longevity genes, on the day in 1967 that my paternal, Bohemian-immigrant great-grandparents would have celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary, one daughter was living in Indiana, as were several third-generation descendants; one third- and fourth-generation branch was in Oregon; and at least two branches of the family (third and fourth generations) would have had to travel back to Chicago from their homes in California. Several years later, a third-generation descendant had moved to Alabama, and fourth generations were also settled in Wyoming and New Mexico. And yet, the twenty-two people buried in the family plot at BNC span four generations: the first generation being my great-great grandparents and the sole representative of the fourth generation being a one-month-old baby who died in 1903 (his parents are buried at Woodlawn, as are many of the third generation).

This got me to wondering: do any of our readers have family plots at BNC that span more than four generations? Let me know at editor@friendsofbnc.org.

Na shledanou!
carol jean smetana

Děkuji vám!

CIT employees **Yolanda Carlo, Jeff Haden, Sheila Kowalski, Amy Latreille, Amy Michalek, Daniella Navarro, Ross Succoso, Ephraim Tomenbang, and Michelle Wiley** for providing flags for Memorial Day and helping with their placement and with gardening;

Marge Sladek Stueckemann and Jim Trnka for help with Memorial Day flag placement; **Chuck Michalek** for help with flag placement and gardening; **Mary Syrup** for help with gardening and for providing refreshments for Memorial Day;

Arline Artist and Mary Syrup for providing refreshments for our walking tours;

Chuck Michalek for volunteering to co-chair the Special Projects committee and to chair the Columbarium Restoration sub-committee; **Chuck and Jerry Gaydusek** for supervising the roof restoration;

Jim Trnka for volunteering to be a Friends Director.

What's New with Friends of BNC

Five years ago, in 2012, our "Under the Dome" celebration highlighted the thrill of having begun the restoration of John Mallin's beautiful artwork in one section of the Ceremony Hall in the crematorium/columbarium building. Unfortunately, we then discovered that the roof was still leaking (despite our previously having spent over \$60,000 repairing various parts), and the artwork restoration had to be stopped to raise funds to restore the roof, as well as other structural parts of the building.

Finally in June, we had raised the \$114,300 needed to start the repairs, and **Knickerbocker Roofing** began work. There is more information on this wonderful development on the first page, and it is hard to contain my enthusiasm to see this come to pass! It is thanks to your financial support plus our successful tours and galas that we have achieved this milestone.

After the repair of the dome roof, there will still be more work needed to weatherproof the crematorium/columbarium building, and **Chuck**

Michalek has volunteered to chair the Columbarium Restoration Committee.

Join us to celebrate the Chicago Cubs' big 2016 World Series win at our summer meeting on Sunday, August 20th at 1:30 p.m. in the crematorium/columbarium's cool entryway. Wear any Cubs gear you have, and hear **Chuck Betzold** explain about the Beyond the Vines columbarium just to the east of the building. As the excitement for the Cubs' run for the World Series

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Live from BNC

During the months of May, June and July, **Chuck Betzold** and his friends continued to take down trees and branches throughout the cemetery, cutting them up and trucking them to the dump area. Because the area had been filling up with both the tree cuttings and excess dirt from grave-digging, the cemetery contracted to have truckloads of the dirt removed, making more room for the tree and branch cuttings.

The busy month of May at the cemetery started with the CSA Fraternal Life lodges' annual **Join Hands Day**, when members of the many **District 12 lodges of CSA Fraternal Life** participate in a clean-up day at the cemetery. The members not only tidy up the cemetery grounds but also the interiors of the gatehouse and crematorium/columbarium

building. This has been an annual project for the CSA lodges for the past ten years, and the **BNCA Board** and cemetery general manager

attended. BNCA president **Dave Pimm** read a memorial to all mothers, after which a wreath was laid at the Mother Monument in front of the building. After the ceremony refreshments were provided at the gatehouse for all. Mother's Day is always a very busy time at the cemetery, as many people come to visit the graves.



Elizabeth Raleigh have been very satisfied.

It was great timing this year because the annual Mother's Day ceremony was held the next day, May 14th, in the Ceremony Hall of the crematorium/columbarium building. The ceremony was well

attended. BNCA president **Dave Pimm** read a memorial to all mothers, after which a wreath was laid at the Mother Monument in front of the building. After the ceremony refreshments were provided at the gatehouse for all. Mother's Day is always a very busy time at the cemetery, as many people come to visit the graves. On May 29th the annual Memorial Day commemoration was held. The program started with everyone assembling at the gatehouse. Members of CSA lodges along with many other Czech organizations and led by **Sokol Spirit Youth** then marched to the crematorium/columbarium building for the service. The guest speaker was **Milana Ličková**, Deputy Consul General at the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Chicago.

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Stories of the Stones: Spikings, An Early Pioneer Family

by carol jean smetana

In 1877 the newly incorporated Bohemian National Cemetery Association bought 50 acres of land in Jefferson Township, nine miles north of Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood. Soon after, the cemetery founders set about improving their property. The first roads were surveyed by Jan (John) V. Beneš in the familiar grid pattern of Chicago's streets, but he designed three intersections as large circles to be used for future public monuments. (That vision would be realized in later years with the installations of the Ladimír Klácel Monument, the Civil War Veterans Monument, and the World Wars I and II Memorial.)

BNCA placed newspaper ads for

someone to build those roads. Richard Spikings, a contractor and pioneer settler of Jefferson Township, answered one of the ads. Spikings agreed to grade and gravel the cemetery roads for 2-1/2 cents

PROPOSALS.

Proposals for Breaking and Graveling Road on the Bohemian Cemetery, in the Town of Jefferson.

Bids for the breaking of roads and graveling on the Bohemian Cemetery, in the town of Jefferson, will be received by John V. Beneš, 44 Duncker-st., Chicago. For plans and specifications apply at the same place until March 26, 1878.

**J. V. HENK8,
44 Duncker-st., Chicago.**

Chicago Tribune, March 22, 1878

per square foot, guaranteeing his work for a year, after insisting on making a ditch for draining rainwater away from the roads.

Richard Young Spikings was born in Cambridgeshire, England, in 1820 and immigrated to the United States in 1842. In 1847 he married Cornelia Augusta Harding; her father owned land in Jefferson Township, including the acreage roughly bounded by Pulaski Road on the west, Kedzie Avenue

on the east, the north branch of the Chicago River on the north, and Lawrence Avenue on the south. In 1852 Spikings acquired sixty acres of the original Harding tract, extending from the northeast corner of what is now Lawrence Avenue and Pulaski Road north to Foster Avenue. (In 1907 the northwest corner of this land would become the site of the Bohemian Old People's Home and Orphanage.)

Spikings worked at a variety of jobs in addition to farming his land and contracting: saloon keeper, butcher, horse doctor, salesman. He also served in the Civil War with the Third Illinois Cavalry during the 1861-2 fighting in Missouri.

Roadwork was only the beginning of the Spikings family's association with Bohemian National Cemetery. Richard and Cornelia had seven children who lived to adulthood, but sadly, in 1882, one of their sons died at the young age of 29. He was buried at BNC. Over the next three decades, nine more Spikings would be laid to rest in the family plot: two grandchildren who died as toddlers, two as adolescents, and one who died a young adult; a daughter-in-law; another son; and, in 1910, Richard's wife Cornelia, at the age of 83. The following year Richard himself died at the age of



Individual grave markers for Richard Young Spikings and his wife Cornelia front the Spikings family monument.



The Spikings family plot

90 and was buried next to his wife.

The Spikings family plot included the entire southwest quarter of Block 5 in Section M, located in front of the old two-story vault, which had a lower level for caskets and a nonsectarian chapel for services on the upper level. In 1913 construction of the crematorium/columbarium building began on the same site, and the cemetery decided to buy back the lots in front of the new building. In

1916 the Spikings burials were removed to lots in Section 15 that the family received in trade for their original lots.

The Spikings property south of the cemetery was inhabited by family members for almost a century. In 1871, Richard and Cornelia's oldest son William Harding Spikings (1848-1944), using bricks from his own factory, built a large home at 4853 Pulaski Road where he lived with his family

for almost 70 years. In 1940, he finally sold the home along with the last piece of the original Spikings land, and the house was torn down shortly thereafter. William died in 1944 at the age of 95 and was buried in the family plot. Today there are four generations of Spikings descendants buried at Bohemian National Cemetery with pioneers Richard and Cornelia – more than 30 related people.

Memorial Day Preparations at BNC

Because the Bohemian National Cemetery Association is a fraternal organization, many of the tasks and chores at BNC run on "volunteer power." The Friday before Memorial Day has become a traditional workday at the cemetery when volunteers gather to place flags along the roads and spruce up the cemetery for the Memorial Day commemoration. Most of our volunteers come from the Czech-Slovak community. But for the past four years, employees from CIT Group, Rail Division Sector (photo below left), have been joining in the preparation, supplying decorative flags and helping with their placement, as well as helping with gardening. This year several of the employees also helped paint the flower containers on the steps of the crematorium/columbarium building. The group was led by Amy Michalec. If you'd like to join in the volunteer fun, email Chuck Michalek at michalekchas@aol.com or call Marge at 847-362-9036.



Also helping to prepare the cemetery for the Memorial Day program were Friends members Chuck Michalek, Marge Sladek Stueckemann and Jim Trnka, along with volunteers from the First Czechoslovak Garden Club of America - its president Leonard Becker and members George Lacina and Mary Syrup. They dug up the sod and planted flowers at the Cermak mausoleum and Klacel Circle (right).

Photos courtesy of Chuck Michalek

Restoration Begins!



(continued from first page)

handrails were a safety hazard). Friends funded the replacement of the terrace and stairs first and then paid for new handrails, as reported in previous newsletters.

To address the roof problem, three qualified roofing contractors were contacted and asked to submit proposals to repair and restore the columbarium's dome roof. After reviewing each proposal, Friends recommended Knickerbocker Roofing Company to the BNCA Board of Directors, which has final responsibility for maintenance and repair of all BNC buildings. Knickerbocker has a reputation for quality work on historic buildings, such as Wrigley Field and several on the University of Chicago campus.

Knickerbocker's report indicated the main dome, covered with Ludowici French red clay tiles, drains into a copper box gutter assembly around the perimeter, with drainage into four copper downspouts. The top of the dome roof is capped by an ornamental copper finial that also

functions as a roof vent. Several water penetration sites were identified. At the May BNCA Board meeting, representatives from Knickerbocker reviewed and discussed their proposal and answered questions from the board members. The BNCA Board voted to hire Knickerbocker for the dome/roof project, with funds provided by Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery.

The roof repairs were started at the end of June and are anticipated to be finished by mid-August. Several additional problems were discovered as the work began with the removal of old materials. For example, the present gutter placement and inadequate sizing of the gutters likely resulted in overflows during heavy rain conditions and in snow-ice-melt conditions.

BNCA and Friends boards will be kept informed on the progress of the work. Articles in *Heritage Happenings* and on our website will update Friends members and donors funding

the preservation of the crematorium/columbarium building. Your financial support is greatly needed and greatly appreciated. This fall, Friends of BNC will announce the "Bridging the Past to the Future" capital campaign to generate funds for the next phase of this historic building's restoration.



The photo above shows the preparation of the area where the dome roof meets the stone wall of the drum (the round part) of the building. New improved copper flashing, gutters and scupper boxes (which collect rainwater and funnel it into the downspouts) will be installed.

Photos courtesy of Chuck Michalek



(continued from page 3) Photos courtesy of Chuck Michalek

Children of the **T. G. Masaryk Czech School** in Cicero read poetry they had written for the occasion, accompanied with violin music played by their teacher **Klara Moldova**. **Ed Slavic** performed music commemorating all branches

financing the work being done by **Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving Company** of Harvey, Illinois, to repair the roof and gutters of the building. (See the story on page one.)

On July 9th the annual Bohemian National Cemetery Picnic

Live from BNC

of the U.S. Armed Forces. The program ended with "Taps" played by **Tom Pajer** of Sokol Spirit.

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery had new railings installed on the stairs leading up to the crematorium/columbarium building. They also are

was held; it started at noon and continued until 5 p.m. We had a great turnout of approximately 200 people. There was Czech music as usual, and for food hot dogs and potato pancakes as usual. However this year there was also fried prasky and fried buchta along with fried onions and rye bread. Chuck Betzold conducted three tours of the cemetery, at 10 a.m., noon and 2 p.m.; a total of 92 people took part. Everyone had a good time.

As I have said many times, come out and enjoy what Bohemian National Cemetery has to offer.

Andy Bultas
BNCA Board Member

What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from page 3)

heated up, the "Cubs Wall" brought all four of the Chicago television stations to the cemetery to find out more about it, interviewing, among others, Chuck and the BNCA president, **David Pimm**. Various people come just to see this unique columbarium. It is pretty special to have something like this in our cemetery!

This is also our annual meeting, so do come and vote. **Jim Trnka** has agreed to be our third director, replacing **Evelyn Frenek Fergle**,

who passed away in April.

Thanks to the Czech Republic's **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** for a generous grant to enable us to do some very needed work on the trees this fall. It is always a delight to have our ancestral land supporting our work here in the U.S.

We also hope to see you at one of the fall tours, on Saturday, September 16th, either at 10:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. Note that the date for these tours has been moved up to the 16th (they were originally scheduled for the 23rd).

I'm looking forward to seeing you at our summer meeting. It's a wonderful opportunity to meet fellow members and learn more about what is going on with Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery.

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Welcome to Our New Members!

- Morgan Bulman ... Wheaton, IL
- Kevin Hurbanis ... Minneapolis, MN
- A. J. Kralovec III ... Cave Creek, AZ
- Amy Michalec (CIT) ... Chicago, IL
- Sarah Royston ... Chicago, IL

Donations

Leadership (\$10,000 and above)

Charles Michalek

Donors (\$25—\$99)

Anonymous
Dorothy Harris
Lani Flesch *in memory of Evelyn Krenek Fergle*

Thank You (\$1—\$24)

Anonymous
Cindy Bueneman

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

I incorrectly spelled the name of one of our donors in the last issue: It should have been Juanita Spirek Lo Giudice. My apologies.

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

Sunday, August 20th at 1:30 pm ~ Friends Summer Meeting
Chuck Betzold presents a program on "Beyond the Vines"
Meet in the crematorium/columbarium building ~ Free to all.

Saturday, September 16th at 10:00 am & 1:00 pm ~
Tours of the Tombstones guided by **Albert Walavich**
No reservations needed ~ \$10 members, \$15 nonmembers
Meet in the gatehouse.

Sunday, October 22nd or October 29th ~
(date yet to be determined)
Save the Date(s) for BNCA's Celebration of the **140th Anniversary of the Founding of Bohemian National Cemetery**
We will have information on our website as soon as it becomes available.



Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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Heritage Happenings

we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery presents "Beyond the Vines" a program on the outdoor columbarium inspired by the Friendly Confines of Wrigley Field

Sunday, August 20th at 1:30 pm

Bohemian National Cemetery
Crematorium/Columbarium Building
5255 N. Pulaski Rd., Chicago

- ⇒ Light refreshments
- ⇒ Election of officers
- ⇒ Update on activities



*Join speaker Chuck Betzold and fellow
Cub fans. Dress for game day ~ wear your colors!*

(White Sox fans welcome, too!)