

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Fall Issue ~ Vol. XV No. 2

October 2018

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

We are so sorry to report that Chuck Cervenka passed away at the age of 93 on Thursday, October 4th. Chuck was one of the original members of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery: he and his wife Martha donated \$1000 to start our treasury. Chuck was a director on the Friends board from our beginning in 2004 until 2016. Chuck was a tireless worker for both the Bohemian National Cemetery and Friends. He was delighted that we



were supporting the cemetery and restoring the buildings. When work began on the gatehouse, Chuck drove from his home in Downers Grove at least weekly to help repair and improve the gatehouse, venturing down into the basement to replace electrical wiring and plumbing. Chuck, along with Jerry Gaydusek and Chuck Michalek, helped repair the gatehouse roof and the interior ceiling. Chuck Cervenka was instrumental in planning our galas and always had a big smile and good word for everyone. He will be

(continued on page 3)

Live from BNC

New Volunteer and "Visiting Volunteers" Help at BNC

Courtney Schaaf reached out to Friends of BNC's website looking for opportunities to volunteer and has become a great addition to the Wednesday volunteer crew. She enjoys helping out on a weekly basis with "the regular guys" and mentioned that volunteering gives her a great sense of accomplishment.

She noted that working outside at the cemetery provides a nice break from her work as a flight scheduler for United Airlines.

Another volunteer this summer was young Conner Michalek, a great-nephew of Chuck Michalek. Connor also enjoyed working outdoors and had the opportunity

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Heritage Happenings

Heritage Happenings is published quarterly by Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

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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Gaydusek, Chuck Michalek

Webmaster: *carol jean smetana*



from the editor's laptop

Our membership year ends in December, so in the upcoming weeks, you will receive a membership renewal form in the mail. (unless you are in the first year of a two-year membership). But you don't have to wait for the reminder. Download the form from our website, www.friendsofbnc.org, and send it in with your check or credit card information. You can also renew online via our new store link. It's easy and it's safe!

To commemorate the centennial of the founding of Czechoslovakia, this issue's "Stories of the Stones" introduces a few of the veterans of the Czechoslovak Legion who have graves or niches at Bohemian National Cemetery. Below are the names of the Legionnaires we have identified at BNC. Do you have an ancestor or relative who was a Legionnaire and is buried at the cemetery? Contact me at editor@friendsofbnc.org or by mail: 167 County Road A4A, Sapello, NM 87745. I'd love to hear about him and see any photos you might have!

Na shledanou! carol jean smetana

Legionnaire Veterans at Bohemian National Cemetery (Incomplete List)

František Alšer (1896-1925)	Václav Kindl (1873-1928)	Konstantin Přecechtěl (1891-1961)
Josef Bagel (1891-1950)	Martin Komoraš (1887-1938)	Jiří (George) Prokop (1890-1961)
Stanislav Bejšovec (1895-1950)	Josef Kozel (1880-1926)	Antonín Šídlo (1893-1939)
František Čadek (1884-1945)	Jan Kračmer (1894-1924)	Stanislav Šika (1891-1969)
Rudolf Celman (1881-1947)	Josef Mácha (1879-1935)	František Škarda (1884-1929)
Štěpán Chalabala (1884-1965)	Josef Matějka (1868-1938)	Miroslav Skřivanek (1886-1986)
Václav Čihák (1900-1975)	Antonín Matouš (1882-1934)	Václav (James) Slanina (1883-1945)
Václav Čimera (1874-1938)	Josef Matuna (1889-1946)	Jan Štross (1884-1936)
František Ditrich (1857-1933)	Václav Mrštík (1879-1950)	Alois Tolař (1886-1921)
Josef Dobiáš (1888-1965)	Karel (Charles) Kálmán Naništa (1900-1920)	Jan Uhrík (1895-1982)
Jan Filko (1892-1970)	Václav Niedrle (1900-1949)	Otto Vaniš (1886-1939)
Štěpán Franta (1884-1955)	Antonín Nudera (1880-1955)	Adolf Višinka (1896-1953)
Jan Herodes (1898-1945)	František Nudera (1881-1962)	Bohumil [Robert] Vykoukal (1882-1923)
Eduard Hošek (1895-1927)	Václav (James) Pálek (1898-1976)	Jan Wenzbauer (1880-1957)
Vojtěch (Albert) Houška (1895-1955)	Jan Papánek (1896-1991)	Boleslav Žitný (1882-1957)
Bedřich Jelínek (1879-1934)	Josef Pech (1897-1923)	
	Josef Píkal (1885-1945)	

Welcome to Our New Members!

Frank Chapman
Newburgh, IN

Kristina Fredericksen
Scottsdale, AZ

Děkuji Vám!

Gerri Romanelli for her work as our Membership Chair;
Thelma Malecek for volunteering to be our new Membership Chair;

Mary Syrup and **Arline Artist** for treats at the August meeting, and **Mary** again for treats at the September tours;

Chuck Michalek for cleaning and setting up the gatehouse for the tours;

Chuck Betzold for the fence banner for the tours;

Carol Jean Smetana for finding our August meeting speaker.



What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)

missed greatly. Our condolences to Martha.

Treestones are one of the many unusual features of Bohemian National Cemetery. We are delighted that the first new treestone monument in 70 (!) years will be installed at the cemetery this spring! Walter Arnold, the talented stone carver who is creating it, was our speaker at our August 19th summer meeting. Twenty-five people came to hear a very interesting, illustrated presentation about his work, showing how he chose the limestone, started to carve it, and slowly the desired shape emerged as he chiseled away. He had wanted to be a carver from his teens, and found a way to get to Italy to apprentice to master carvers there.

This year marks the centennial celebration of the

founding of Czechoslovakia, and the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Chicago organized a number of events, including a special guided tour of the cemetery on September 29th, hosted by Friends of BNC and the Bohemian National Cemetery Association. Friends president Marge Sladek Stueckemann and BNCA vice-president Bill Hudecek welcomed the participants, including representatives of the government of the Czech Republic. Chuck Betzold led the walking tour, with assistance from Chuck Michalek and Bill Hudecek. A beautiful wreath was laid at the World War I side of the World Wars I and II Memorial.

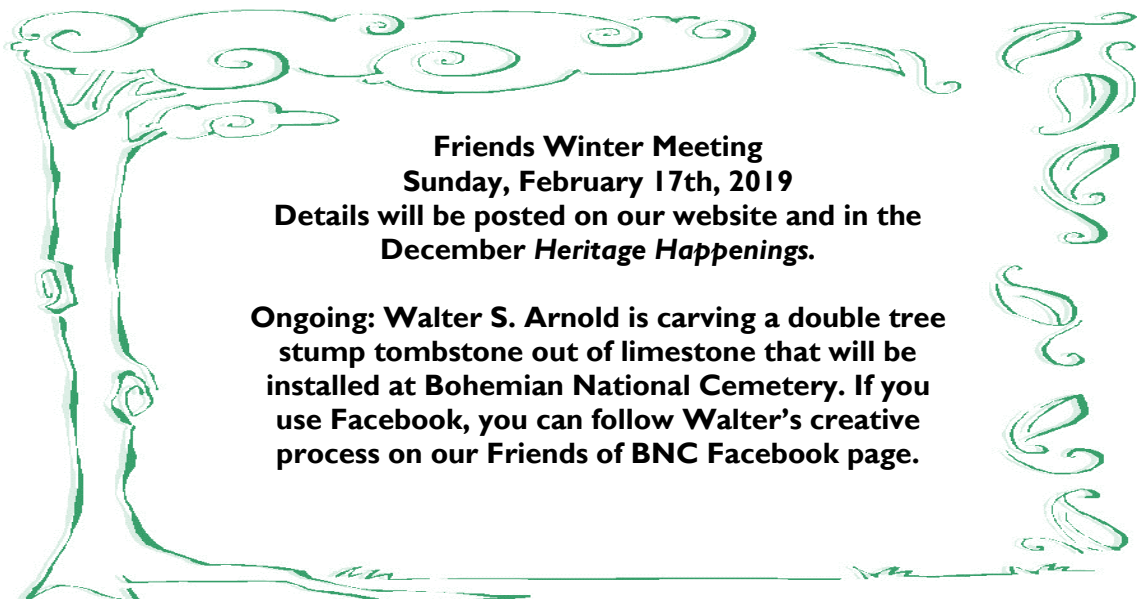
Among the interesting people in attendance were a girl from South Dakota in her kroj; Anton Cermak Kerner, grandson of Mayor Cermak;

and descendants of Charles Crane, who helped fund the founding of Czechoslovakia and introduced Professor T.G. Masaryk to President Woodrow Wilson. We were honored to have Czech Radio there, recording what we told them about the gatehouse and other buildings. People stayed to enjoy the kolacky and coffee, provided by Friends, with the last guests leaving an hour after the tour was to end!

A final event for the centennial will be the Czech Philharmonic playing Dvorak's *New World Symphony* at Symphony Center on Sunday, November 4th at 3:00 p.m. The Consulate will sponsor a reception that afternoon after the concert. Perhaps I will see you there!

**Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President**

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery



**Friends Winter Meeting
Sunday, February 17th, 2019
Details will be posted on our website and in the
December *Heritage Happenings*.**

Ongoing: Walter S. Arnold is carving a double tree stump tombstone out of limestone that will be installed at Bohemian National Cemetery. If you use Facebook, you can follow Walter's creative process on our Friends of BNC Facebook page.

Stories of the Stones

The Legionnaires of BNC

by carol jean smetana



When World War I broke out in Europe, Tomáš G. Masaryk, Eduard Beneš and General Milan Štefánik led a national liberation campaign to persuade the Allies to dissolve the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the war and recognize a Czechoslovak republic. The establishment of the Czechoslovak legions manifested the desire of Czechs and Slovaks for an independent country.

Legions were formed in Russia, France and Italy, and eventually grew to be 100,000 strong, with Slovaks comprising ten percent of their ranks. The majority of legionnaires were either expats living in Russia, France and Italy, or Czech and Slovak soldiers in the Imperial and Royal Army of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire who had been taken prisoner or had deserted. In addition, an estimated 3000 Czechs and Slovaks living in the United States were recruited to join the Czechoslovak Legion in France, including 600 from the Chicago area.

Not surprisingly, Bohemian National Cemetery became the final resting place for many legionnaire veterans. To date, we've identified fifty legionnaires at BNC (see editor's column on page two), including a few who served with the legions in Italy and Russia and

emigrated after the war.

Antonín Šídlo, from southern Moravia, was a private in the Imperial and Royal Army when he was taken captive in May 1915 in what is today southeast Poland. When Russian

"Without a fighting army, our struggle for independence will remain unnoticed."

~Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk
February 1916

authorities allowed Czechs and Slovaks to recruit among the POWs in the summer of 1917, Šídlo was released to join the Czechoslovak Legion. He participated in its legendary odyssey across Siberia to Vladivostok. American and British ships completed the evacuation of the Czechoslovak legions in September 1920, but Šídlo stayed behind in Harbin, a city on the Chinese section of the trans-Siberian railroad that had become home to 100,000 White Russians after the 1917 October Revolution.



Anton Šídlo's niche includes a photo of him in his Legionnaire uniform and a red and white Legionnaire ribbon.

Two years later, in July 1922, Antonín Šídlo and his Russian-born wife Helen sailed to Vancouver, British Columbia, and then took the train to Chicago to join Antonín's uncle, who had paid their passage. Šídlo died in 1939; his ashes are in a niche in the crematorium/columbarium building.

The majority of legionnaire veterans at Bohemian National Cemetery, unlike Šídlo, were immigrants, mostly from Bohemia, who had already been living in the United States for several years when they joined the Legion. Military offices established by the Czechoslovak National Council in Chicago, Cleveland, Omaha, and other cities recruited Czechoslovak volunteers and transported them to France; the first recruits shipped out in November 1917. The council was also responsible for



political activity and commissioned the propaganda recruitment postcards of Vojtěch Preissig (see back page).

Most BNC legionnaires were residing in the Chicago area when they

volunteered. Not **Stanley Bejšovec**: he was living in Tabor, South Dakota, and enlisted in Omaha in November 1917. Stanley had emigrated from Bohemia with his parents and two siblings in 1905, when he was just ten years old. When he joined the Legion, he was already a naturalized citizen. After the war, Stanley returned to South Dakota, married, and eventually moved his young family to Chicago, where he died in 1950.

The story of **Josef Dobiáš** is more typical of the BNC legionnaires. He immigrated to Chicago from Bohemia in 1913, when he was in his mid-twenties. Four years later, on November 10, 1917, he volunteered at the Chicago recruiting office. He joined the legionnaires in France on December 2, 1917, was honorably discharged in May 1919, and returned to the United States. When he became a citizen in 1936 (based in part on his service in the Czechoslovak legion), one of his witnesses was fellow legionnaire **James Čihák**. Josef died in 1965.

Karel Naništa was born in Budapest of Slovak parents. His family emigrated when he was a toddler, and he had just turned 18 when he volunteered in Chicago. After ten months with the French Czechoslovak Legion, he returned to Chicago and died a year later in 1920.

Joseph Mácha joined the Czechoslovak Legion two weeks after he registered for the U.S. draft. He was 39 years old and single and had

lived in Chicago for 15 years. He volunteered on October 1,



1918, served three months with the French Legion, and then returned to Chicago. Joseph died in 1935.

Adolf Višina, a Croatian, was born in 1897



Adolf Višina

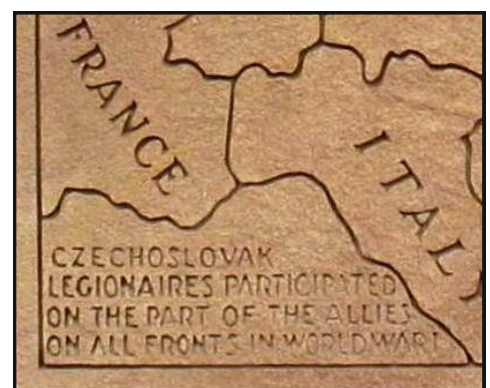
and came to Chicago in 1913. In 1917 Adolf volunteered for the Czechoslovak Legion, and after almost a year with the Legion, he returned to Chicago. He died in 1953.

All the legionnaires we have found at BNC so far have been immigrants, with one exception. **Otto Vaniš** was born in 1886 in Chicago to parents who had emigrated from Bohemia. In 1907 he married Vlasta Koudelka, and they had four children: Otto born in 1908, Frank born in

1909, John born in 1910, and Annie born in July 1913. Annie died four months later in November 1913. A month

later, on Christmas Day, four-year-old Frank died. Tragedy for the Vaniš family did not end there.

Four years later, their younger son John, seven years old, died in February, and a month later their last surviving child, nine-year-old Otto Jr., died. A year later, Vaniš volunteered for the Czechoslovak Legion. After a year of service he returned to the United States in September 1919. Then in April 1920 Otto enlisted in the U.S. Army and served for three years. In the 1920s he and Vlasta divorced, and by 1930 Otto had remarried. He died in 1939 and is buried with his children.



The Czechoslovak Legionnaires are commemorated on the World Wars I and II Memorial at Bohemian National Cemetery with these words: "CZECHOSLOVAK LEGIONNAIRES PARTICIPATED ON THE PART OF THE ALLIES ON ALL FRONTS IN WORLD WAR I."

Donations



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(\$10,000 and above)

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Josefa Sykora and their children*

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Thank You

(\$1—\$24)

Michael E. Condon

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Thalia Puncochar

Delphine Schaefer

Thank you all for your generosity.

Your donations help support the

Columbarium Restoration Project

and preserve and restore

Bohemian National Cemetery.

Donor Wall Update

The impressive donor wall has been installed and is awaiting the top title plate and bottom "appreciation plate." Individual donor plates are offered for donors at the \$1,000, \$10,000, and \$25,000 level and provide the opportunity for recognizing or memorializing individuals and family members. Names of donors of \$100 to \$999 can be listed on a group plate.

Live from BNC

(continued from first page)
to visit his grandparents and great-grandparents inurned at BNC's Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum.

We even had an international visitor volunteer her time at the cemetery this summer: Dotti Varga, a visitor from Serbia. She and her parents are friends of Chuck Michalek.



Volunteer Dotti Varga helped water plants at the cemetery during the hot, dry summer days.

Jerry Gaydusek located a unique sundial that had come loose on one of the gravestones. He cleaned and repainted it, and then he and Chuck refastened the sundial to the top of the grave, helping restore and preserve one of the many unique gravemarker elements at BNC.

Recently Chuck Michalek and Jerry Gaydusek started patching some of the potholes near the gatehouse and office building. Volunteers spruced up the metal sidewalk trap door leading

to the gatehouse crawlspace, removing the rust and painting it.

If you are interested in joining our friendly group of volunteers on Wednesdays, email Chuck at michalekchas@aol.com.

Chuck Michalek
Friends of BNC Volunteer



Some of the "Wednesday volunteers" from left to right are: Jim Miller, Bill Servis, Bob Weinger, Carl Brader, Courtney Shaaf, Connor Michalek, Chuck Betzold.

Columbarium Restoration Project Update: Planning for Second Phase of Exterior Restoration

by Chuck Michalek

Several CRP committee members met with representatives of Marion Restoration Inc., in August to review and update the proposal for the next phase of the restoration—critical repairs to the exterior dome walls. The work will include repairing the upper and lower cornices that surround the dome; repairing, resetting and sealing balustrades and coping units around the top of

the dome wall; repairing wall stones that have spalled due to rusting anchors behind wall sections; and replacing lintels above the dome's stained glass windows. The updated proposal will be reviewed by Friend's Board and BNCA's Board of Directors.

Work on this phase can commence in spring 2019 if we have raised the necessary funds. Friends applied for a 2019 grant from the Czech

Republic to assist with this project, and we are continuing our other fundraising efforts. To date, donations from individuals and organizations have raised almost 70% of the anticipated cost of this phase. We appreciate the many donations already made (see recent donations listed on page six). We still need to raise a considerable amount for this phase of work.

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

P.O. Box 72746
Roselle, IL 60172-0746

Phone: 847-362-9036
Email: info@friendsofbnc.org



Heritage Happenings

we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org

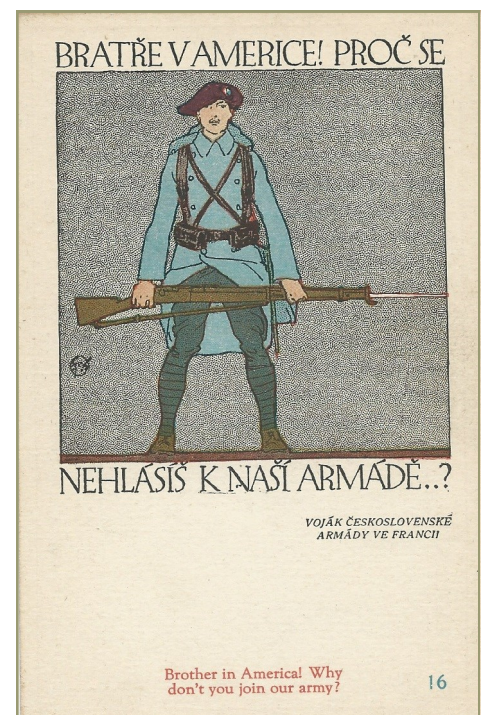


RECRUITING FOR THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEGIONS

The Czechoslovak National Council in the United States sponsored lecture series and developed promotional literature to support the cause of Czechoslovak independence. Vojtěch Preissig, a graphic designer from Bohemia who lived in the United States from 1910 to 1930, played a vital role in this effort. His posters and postcards urged his Czech and Slovak compatriots to join the Czechoslovak legions and helped raise funds for their support. Preissig returned to Czechoslovakia in 1931. During World War II, the Nazis arrested Preissig and he died at the concentration camp in Dachau in 1944.



*"For our independence with our
Czechoslovak Army."*



*"Brother in America! Why don't
you join our army?"*