

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Spring Issue ~ Vol. XVI No. 4

April 2020

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

What's New with Friends of BNC

We are happy to announce a grant of \$5,321 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, money we requested to begin repair of the cemetery roads, a truly needed project! These grants require that we supplement the amount with funds from our treasury; in this case, we will add at least \$3,000. We hope the roadwork can be done this summer, and while this amount will not cover repair of all the roads, the next time you visit the cemetery you will enjoy a smoother ride.

We are disappointed that the wonderful Mother's Day celebration with the children and families of the TG Masaryk School will not be able to take place, due to the coronavirus pandemic. We also will not be able to place flags for Memorial Day, nor will the cemetery be able to sponsor the annual Memorial Day service.

The uncertainty of the COVID-19 experience impacts us all. Perhaps

(Continued on page 3)

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery thanks the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic for their continued support.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic

Inside this issue

Officers	2
from the editor's laptop	2
Děkuji Vám	2
New Members	2
Upcoming Events at BNC	3
Stories of the Stones—100 Years Ago	4
CRP Update	5
Donations	6
"Sing Down Memory Lane"	6
21st Century Publicity	7
friendsofbnc.org	8

Live from BNC

a reminder that we go on...

Due to winter weather and the coronavirus quarantine precautions, BNC volunteers patiently await the return of warm weather and safe opportunities to gather again. It is interesting to note many of BNC's monuments and memorials are a testimony to tragic events. The Civil War

Veterans Monument, Spanish-American War Veterans Monument, the World Wars I and II Memorial, and the *Eastland* Disaster Memorial all commemorate times of great loss and suffering. The building of these memorials and the countless

(continued on page 7)

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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Officers of Friends of BNC

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Newsletter: *carol jean smetana*

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Sales/Marketing Chair:

Juli Nelson

Special Projects Co-Chair:

Chuck Michalek

Webmaster: *carol jean smetana*

from the editor's laptop



Most of us are experiencing some measure of “Stay at home” and “Only essential travel allowed” with varying degrees of acceptance, adaptability, concern, enthusiasm, discomfort, wistfulness. Many of us are rediscovering activities we enjoy that do not depend on “the outside world.” If you’re fortunate to have an internet connection, do take a look at our website www.friendsofbnc.org (see back page).

I imagine some of you, like myself, are devoting hours to genealogical pursuits. One of the treasures I recently came across as I try to organize and cull my genealogy papers is a collection of 2- and 3-page vignettes written by Otto Vasak, a friend of my father, with titles such as “Beaver Patrol” (about his Boy Scout troop), “The Christmas Tree,” “A Clubhouse,” “Crystal Sets,” “Horse Power” (about the horse-drawn wagons that delivered milk, ice, and fruits and vegetables when he was young), and “North Berwyn Congregational Church”—brief essays about people, places and activities from his youth. What a treasure! I hope you’ll think about writing some of your memories to share with succeeding generations. Eventually Otto published a 450-page autobiography *But Anyway...A Life Well Lived—a daunting undertaking, but doable because he approached it one vignette at a time. I remember that when I get overwhelmed by all I need/want to do on my genealogy project. One step at a time.*

When Friends of BNC realized that the crematorium/columbarium building needed repairs that might total close to a million dollars, the idea of raising that much money seemed overwhelming. But instead of giving up when confronted with the obstacle of raising an unimaginable amount of money, we took one step—and then another—and another. And we’re making progress on saving this beautiful building, one step at a time—the path to success!

Na shledanou
carol jean smetana

Děkuji Vám!

Glenn Spachman for receiving the reservations for our February meeting

Juli Nelson for handling check-in for our meeting

Chuck Michalek for bringing and staffing the book table

at our February meeting

Pat Nelson for helping send out the newsletter

Chuck Betzold, Chuck Michalek and **Bill Servis** for painting the Donor Wall area

Welcome to Our New Members!

Robert Chleborn ... Lincolnwood, IL

Penny McLaren ... Vancouver, WA

Keith Tomes ... Lisle, IL



What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)
if you are close enough to take a drive through BNC, you could be struck by the beautiful angels that are found all over. Somehow, slowly looking at and counting these gorgeous monuments can be a really helpful way to connect with those from the past and raise your spirits. When my grandkids were younger, trying to count angels was one of their favorite games as I slowly wound my way around the grounds!

Another way to connect with the cemetery, even if you aren't in the area, is through

our webpage, www.friendsofbnc.org. There you will even find an online virtual tour.

Although we normally do not feature information on the actual business of burial and cremation, it is interesting to know how the influenza pandemic of 1918–19 impacted Bohemian National Cemetery. In 1918, the total number of burials and cremations increased by 27.5% over the previous year, a very dramatic increase. Now, in 2020, burials have not gone up greatly, but the cremations are very much

higher than usual, so we see a similar impact.

There must surely be a number of people buried at BNC who died of the Spanish flu, but since the reason for death isn't in the cemetery records, it would be hard to trace them. One good story is that Helen Gaydusek's mother contracted the flu but was thankfully able to recover and go on to live her life.

I hope you and your family are staying well.

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

These are addresses?
SW¼, NW¼, sec.11, T40N, R13E
41.978° N, 87.728°W
16 439687E 4647589N

Learn all about them at
www.friendsofbnc.org

Yes, as is this one:
52 hundred north and 40 hundred west

And where did we get that expression
"the back 40" ??

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

All May events at Bohemian National Cemetery have been cancelled, including Mother's Day, Join Hands Day, and Memorial Day services.

Please check our website www.FriendsofBNC.org or our Friends of BNC Facebook page for updates.

Our July newsletter will include updated information.

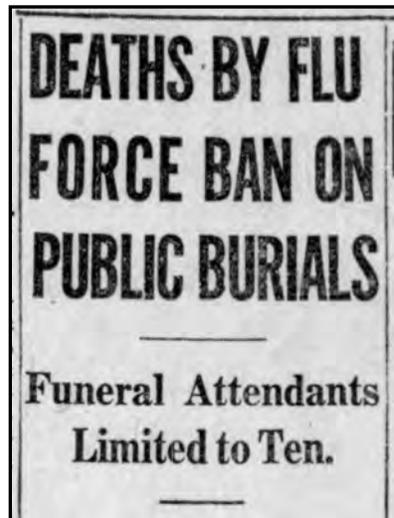


Stories of the Stones: 100 Years Ago

by carol jean smetana

Any pandemic takes a heavy toll on the funeral home industry and cemetery workers, and the current coronavirus pandemic is no exception. As Marge noted in her column "What's New with Friends of BNC," Bohemian National Cemetery is experiencing a heightened demand for its services. Local and state directives regarding the conduct of funerals and burials add stress to all involved, including the BNC staff. We especially appreciate their efforts during these difficult times.

Many news stories today draw comparisons with the 1918–1919 influenza pandemic. The fourth and final wave of that pandemic spread through the U.S. during the first few months of 1920. According to an article published in *The Chicago Daily Tribune* on January 31, 1920, Chicago undertakers contacted the city health commissioner: declaring that the number and size of funerals at present is creating a shortage in automobile livery equipment. There are 175 hearses in the city. On Thursday [January 29] there were more than 300 funerals. Many hearses made two and some three trips to the cemeteries, according to reports to the commissioner.



The Chicago Daily Tribune headline
January 31, 1920, page 1

In response, the Chicago health commissioner issued rules for burials as follow:

- No public church or chapel funerals shall be held in Chicago until further notice.
- No wakes or public gatherings of any kind shall be held with the body present.
- No one except adult relatives and close friends not to exceed ten persons in addition to the undertaker, his assistant the minister, and the necessary drivers, shall be permitted to attend these funerals.

Another restriction on social activities had already taken place that same month: Prohibition—the legal prevention of the

manufacture, transportation and sale of alcoholic beverages—took effect in the United States on January 17, 1920. On January 23rd, Adolph J. Sabath, the Czech-born congressman elected from Chicago's Fifth District, introduced a resolution proposing a 90-day suspension of the requirement for special permits and reports for the medicinal use of alcohol "to the end that whiskey may be prescribed and obtained for medicinal purposes without unnecessary hindrances and delays."



The Daily Free Press (Carbondale, IL)
headline
January 23, 1920, page 3

Commenting on Sabath's action, the *Washington Post* quipped: "Strange how men of like names are so dissimilar in sentiment. Parson Billy Sunday [a popular evangelist of the era and strong supporter of Prohibition] damns Demon Rum as the devil himself, while Representative Adolph Sabath, with a bill to that effect pending, treats him as a family physician."




THE COLUMBARIUM RESTORATION PROJECT
Keeping History Alive

Thanks to the generous support from Friends of BNC donors and others, significant improvements continue to insure the preservation of the historic crematorium/columbarium building.

One of the main goals of the Columbarium Restoration Project involved repairs to the building's exterior to prevent water infiltration that was damaging the plaster and intricate wall decorations painted by John Mallin. As reported previously, in 2017 Knickerbocker Roofing Company installed a new copper gutter system around the dome and made significant repairs to the dome's center copper finial and the dome's top base area, including the replacement of several clay tiles. In 2019, Marion Restoration made critical repairs to the masonry wall, including repairs to upper level balustrades, coping units

and limestone blocks damaged by spalling. Both companies are highly rated preservation contractors and noted for their expert work on historic structures.



The latest fundraising campaign by Friends of BNC will address repairing several

of the building's flat roof areas that have been a source of water filtration in the east and west niche rooms (see photo).



Note to our past donors: the Ceremony Hall donor room's walls and trim recently received a final coat of paint. Newly engraved plates with the names of recent donors are currently being installed.

For the latest news on the project and how to donate, visit friendsofbnc.org or contact michalekchas@aol.com.



Donations

Leadership

(\$10,000 and above)

Donald L. Jones Jr. and
Bradford W. Jones
*in memory of mother
Delores Oparil Jones*

Sponsors

(\$100—\$499)

Robert Graham *in memory of
Vijay Kanta Hanada*
June Jansa
Charlotte Sommer
Keith Tomes

Donors

(\$25—\$99)

Phillip & Mary Kasik
Penny Kolpacki
Christine Kuczora
Helene Schaefer *in memory of
Jerry Gaydusek*
Gloria Skomasa
Glenn Spachmann *in memory of
Jerry Gaydusek*
Marge Stueckemann *in memory
of Jerry Gaydusek*
John & Meribeth Tooke
Donna Zapp Reusing *in
memory of the Zapp family*

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

“Sing Down Memory Lane”

Our winter meeting, held on February 16 at the Czech Plaza Restaurant in Berwyn, Illinois, was an enjoyable



afternoon of good food and great entertainment. Juli Nelson, our membership and sales chair, welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for attending. She went on to introduce the officers of Friends.

The forty-five members and guests in attendance enjoyed a delicious typical Czech Sunday dinner, including liver dumpling soup, breaded pork tenderloin,

roasted chicken and of course the dumplings, sweet sour cabbage and sauerkraut and don't forget the mashed potatoes along with the gravy, followed by

dessert.

Once dinner was over, Chuck Michalek updated everyone on the restoration that has been completed on the columbarium at BNC and the cost of the completed projects. Chuck brought a display board containing photographs taken before the restoration and after the work was completed. What a difference! Thanks, Chuck!



The entertainment for the afternoon was provided by L. J. Slavin playing the mandolin, flute and harmonica. The audience enjoyed every minute of his performance and hummed along while he played some familiar tunes. All of this for \$25, how do you beat that!

***Helen Gaydusek
Secretary***

(continued from first page)
gravestones and family
mausoleums serve as a

and to the loved ones we lost,
so that over time, we may
look back at them and pay
our respects as we
continue on with
life.

and toured Bohemian
National Cemetery. Ivana
Bozděchová, Ph.D., and
Markéta Křížová, Ph.D., both
expressed great interest in
BNC's historical connection to
Chicagoland's Czechoslovak
population and heritage.



Volunteers Bill Servis and Chuck Betzhold painting the Donor Wall room

As time allows,
BNC employees
have been
straightening and
improving some of
the grave markers
and their
foundations,
including one of
the historic
limestone
memorial trees
that had fallen.

Chuck Michalek
"Wednesday Volunteer"
Friends of BNC Volunteer



Markéta Křížová and Ivana Bozděchová in front of the Mother Monument and the crematorium/columbarium building

reminder that following
loss ... life goes on. As
individuals, families and
organizations, we find ways
to heal and grow. And "lest
we forget," we create our
memorials to these tragedies

individual gravestones is
the responsibility of the
owner of the purchased
grave plot.

Two professors from
Charles University in
Prague recently visited

Friends of BNC is searching for a PUBLICITY CHAIR

**HELP
NEEDED!**

Do you like to write?
Are you familiar with platforms
like Facebook?

We haven't had a Publicity
Chairperson for some time,
and would really like to fill
this position.

Twenty years ago, publicity
meant typing up a press
release and mailing it to
newspapers.
Today it's all about online
social media.

Help us increase
our visibility on
social media!

Create posts
for our
Facebook page,
our website
and ... ???

Please email
info@friendsofbnc.org
or call Marge at
847-362-9036
to learn more!



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Heritage Happenings

we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



[wwwfriendsofbnc.org](http://www.friendsofbnc.org)

Activities

- [Become a Member](#)
- [Read the Newsletter](#)
- [Download maps and images](#)
- [Take a virtual tour](#)
- [Look at or order our book](#)

Our website offers an online opportunity to explore the cemetery and read past issues of *Heritage Happenings*. On the left-hand side of the home page, under “Activities,” click on “Download Maps and Images” to open the door to 1) Maps of the Cemetery, including one from 1902, and our map and guide brochure, available in English and in Czech; 2) Virtual Tour, synched up to the guide map—click on a red number to see a point of interest and read information about it; and 3) Slideshows illustrating various themes—Stained Glass, Buildings, Public Monuments, Soldiers and Sailors, and Treestones.

Back on the home page, further down the left-hand side under “Information,” there is a special section on the *Eastland* Disaster. And just below that, don’t miss “Serendipity” for some unexpected educational treats.

Information

-  [report on past events](#)
-  [Eastland memorial](#)
- [Serendipity](#)

Our website is a wonderful way to enjoy the history and beauty of Bohemian National Cemetery from the comfort of your own home. And you can also: buy a gift membership for someone or renew your own; make a donation to the Columbarium Restoration Project or to the general fund for our smaller projects, such as road maintenance or unexpected needed repairs; or purchase a copy of the second edition of *A Dear and Precious Heritage*.

All this is available to you on our website. “Czech” us out!