

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Spring Issue ~ Vol. XVII No. 4

April 2021

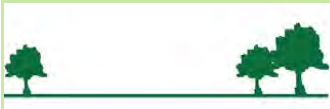
carol jean smetana, editor

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 mourn the passing of Bob Syrup, longtime active member of Friends and our delegate to the Czechoslovak American Congress. He was Friends Director Mary Syrup's husband. He was 86 years old had been ill for some time. Bob's parents were both Czech; they, along with his maternal grandparents, are at rest at BNC. We will all miss Bob, and we send condolences to Mary and his family.

Way back when Friends began with 40 people, guided by Albert

Walavich, our "godfather" who had petitioned the cemetery to form a group like ours, we discussed maybe having some kind of publication about our gem of a building, the crematorium/columbarium building. Four of us plus Albert signed up to divide the many icons in the Ceremony Hall and look up information on them. There was not then the kind of online presence that could tell about some former organization

(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

Live from BNC

To save on heating bills, several repairs and replacements were made to leaking radiator valves in the crematorium/columbarium building. A new remote thermostat was connected to the building's boiler to better monitor inside heat.

A grant was received from the Czech Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs and will be used to make needed improvements to the Pulaski Road concrete fence that formed the foundation of the old greenhouse structure removed in 1989. The repairs will begin this

summer and include power washing the wall, repairing large cracks, and repainting the length of the wall that faces Pulaski Road.

Unfortunately, one of the beveled glass windows on the gatehouse entrance door was broken. A brick smashed the window, but fortunately no entrance was made, and no other damage occurred. The window was recently replaced by a local window repair shop.

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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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Officers of Friends of BNC

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Newsletter: carol jean smetana

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Projects: Chuck Michalek

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from the editor's laptop

Those of you who have been fortunate enough to go on one of Albert's Friends-sponsored guided tours of Bohemian National Cemetery may recall the story he used to tell: After 15–20 minutes or so of walking the cemetery grounds, inevitably someone would ask, "Why are there so many people buried here named 'Rod'?" And Albert would smile and explain that "Rod" isn't a first name but is an abbreviation for the Czech word *rodina*, which means family. Such markers are family stones, and there are many of them at Bohemian National Cemetery. Here are two of them, for the Čížek and Pech families. The Čížek stone includes further information about those buried in the family lot. (The -ova ending in Czech signals that the surname is being used as an adjective: "Which family?" The Pech family." The letter "e" is dropped in the Čížek surname before the adjectival ending in accordance with relevant Czech spelling rules.)

And wasn't that thoughtful of the Pech family to include a hyphen before the -ova ending, thereby setting off the English version of the surname?

Are any of your family lots marked with a family stone?

Na shledanou
carol



Děkuji Vám!

Linda Burton for volunteering to be our new publicity chair — Welcome!!

Chuck Betzold for his work with the trees;

Chuck Michalek for his interesting winter meeting presentation on military monuments at BNC;

Chuck Betzold and **Chuck Michalek** for all the time they spend meeting with contractors about future projects and how we will proceed with

projects such as restoring and beautifying the white wall on Pulaski;

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic for the generous \$6,688 grant to which Friends will add funds to equal \$10,000 to repair the Pulaski wall;

Carol Jean Smetana for editing our newly revised Introduction to the Bohemian National Cemetery Crematorium/Columbarium.



What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)
now long phased out or melded into another. But Albert, Evelyn Fergle, Marilyn John, Juli Nelson and I worked to find the information.

We published the 24-page *Introduction to the Bohemian National Cemetery Columbarium/Crematorium* booklet in 2005. It was given out to dignitaries who visited the cemetery and sold in the cemetery office and at our many tours and in-person meetings. Now we have updated, corrected where needed, and added new pictures (the Donor Wall, the Marble Room) and expanded information on all those iconic

logos we see whenever we are in the Hall. Thanks to Carol Jean Smetana, who edited this, plus new, clearer pictures, it is really an improvement! And because of new printing techniques, we do not need to charge any more than we did 16 years ago: the new version is still price at just \$5.00. Look for the flyer in this issue of the newsletter to order your copy!

It is so sad that due to the pandemic, the cemetery will not be able to host Join Hands Day clean-up, a Mother's Day celebration, nor a Memorial Day service and the flag-placing that precedes it. Perhaps by 2022 the cemetery

will be back to normal.

However, Friends will still have a summer meeting with an excellent speaker in Liz Vogel talking about the plants and animals at BNC. More information will be in the summer newsletter, but please mark the date, Sunday, August 29th, on your calendar!

We are trying to figure out if somehow it could be a hybrid meeting with Zoom and Facebook Live components, plus an in-person gathering for those eager to get out of the house!

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Welcome to Our New Members!

Judith Engels ... Grapevine TX
Dorothy Gray & Family ... Munster IN
John Hospodka & Family ... Chicago IL
Pamela McCann ... Evanston IL

Rebecca Snow ... Salt Lake City UT
Susan Styx ... Saint Petersburg FL
Carol Wootton ... Evanston IL

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

Due to ongoing Covid restrictions, the cemetery will not be hosting programs for Mother's Day or Memorial Day.

**Cemetery grounds are open
7:30 am to 4:00 pm
seven days a week.
Cemetery office is open
8:30 am to 3:00 pm
Monday through Friday.
By appointment only
on Saturday and Sunday.**

Masks required; only two people at counter at a time.



by carol jean smetana



Bohemian National Cemetery is an outdoor gallery of funerary art, featuring a wide variety of grave markers—obelisks, mausoleums, tablets, treestones, and ornate memorials. “Rural” cemeteries with their parklike environments, such as BNC, were popular from the 1860s to the 1920s, and funerary art formed part of their appeal.

Anyone who has spent time wandering a cemetery has likely noticed standardized headstones. Perhaps the most familiar are the government-provided military markers that come in several basic designs, identical markers distinguished only by their inscriptions. But have you ever imagined that even elaborately decorated monuments might not be unique? If you wander the sections of BNC, you might

discover some such monuments. The three featured here comprise one of my favorite examples.

The upright gravestones pictured here are called family stones. Marking an entire family lot rather than a particular individual grave, they are most commonly used in U.S. cemeteries by families of European heritage. The family stone can be inscribed with just the family name or can include individual names and dates of those buried in the lot; a family stone can also be accompanied on the lot by separate markers for individuals.

These three family stones—presiding over the Černošský, Dejmeš and Steklý family lots—prominently display the name of the family patriarch. The granite monuments are located in





different sections of the cemetery, and all of them likely date from the second decade of the 20th century. Each upright stone measures six feet two inches and sits on top of a base stone a little over one foot high, so these three family stones all stand more than seven feet tall!

Early American colonists used symbols of death on gravestones—such as a skull and crossbones, a scythe or an hourglass—to exhort the god-fearing to live a moral life. In the 18th century, symbols became more positive and comforting: winged cherubs and doves represented the flight of the soul to heaven, a weeping willow tree symbolized mourning.

During the Victorian era in the 19th century, headstone iconography became quite fashionable, and gravestones were replete with intricate

resurrection or conversely vanity and self-love. Buds were used to mark the death of a child, a partial flower that of a young adult, a full bloom someone who died in the prime of life, and a wilted flower to indicate a full life. Generally, flowers symbolize beauty and also convey the fragility and transitory nature of life. While the heavy use of symbols on gravestones tailed off with the Great

Depression of the 1930s, lasers and other modern technology are again popularizing the use of designs on headstones.

The family stone featured here incorporates several motifs, including two symbols of death—the winged hourglass and the scythe

(representing the Grim Reaper—its blade curves near the top left of the monument and its handle frames the right side). The edges of a scroll are also visible—a scroll is a symbol of time unfolding that also provides a place for text on a marker.

The ornate carvings

contrast the surrounding granite that has been cut to resemble natural rock, a rustic look popular with the



Note the detailed carving where the **scythe** handle attaches to the blade. And is that a large flower or a group of leaves above the scythe? Can you make out the **lilies** just above the **scroll**? The one on the left in the circle looks to be in full bloom. To its right is a wilted flower. Are those buds below? Is the flower at the top of the circle also a lily?

back-to-nature movement of the early to mid-1900s. These three monuments are clearly from the same model. Individualization is done through, of course, the names inscribed, the addition of ceramic portraits and in one case the addition of a bronze plaque. Can you spot other differences?



The **winged hourglass** is a reminder that "Time flies" and death can come sooner than expected.

symbolism, often uniquely designed to reveal aspects of the lives of the deceased. The Victorian "language of flowers" was incorporated in tombstone designs: a rose symbolized love, beauty and virtue; an Easter lily symbolized purity; a daffodil could represent rebirth and



This **rose** is located just below the letter "J" on the Steklý family stone.

FRIENDS OF BNC'S WINTER PRESENTATION REVEALS FAMILY SURPRISE

On February 28, Friends of BNC's winter Zoom meeting featured a presentation on BNC's military monuments, including individual grave markers depicting various types of military service. The presentation was made by Chuck Michalek, Friends of BNC Projects Chair and BNCA Trustee.



Left to right: Chuck's mother Marie Michalek (with corsage) and his aunts Millie Michalek and Doris Michalek (with white hat)

Included in the presentation was historic film footage from the 1952 dedication ceremony of the

World Wars I and II Memorial at Bohemian National Cemetery, showing thousands

of attendees at the event. Uniformed members of numerous veteran and Czechoslovak organizations were seen in the film completing their march down Pulaski Road from the Bohemian Old Peoples Home to the cemetery.

While previewing the film, Chuck was surprised to see his mother and two aunts sitting in the crowd! He noted they were probably in attendance to support their husbands who had served in WWII and were marching with a veteran or a Sokol group.

Donations

Benefactors (\$1000—\$9999)

Nancy T. Neal and Family in memory of the Hlina and Maly Families

Sponsors (\$100—\$499)

Juli Nelson
Marge Sladek Stueckemann in memory of Bob Syrup

Donors (\$25—\$99)

Beatrice Dvorak Cabanban
Rosemary Macko Wisnosky

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



Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

With the awakening of Spring, thoughts turn to baseball. The BNCA Board has voted to make improvements to the Beyond the Vines outdoor columbarium for devoted Cub fans, dedicated in 2009 and conceived by the late Dennis Mascari. The cemetery will make

improvements and complete granite facing on the unfinished east side of the structure.

Finally, the cemetery has many tasks that can be performed to keep up its appearance. With the warming weather, volunteers will again turn their attention to tree maintenance, as well

as improving old signs and straightening old section sign posts. If you are interested in how you can help with various volunteer projects, contact Chuck Michalek at michalekchas@aol.com.

Chuck Michalek
Friends of BNC Volunteer
Wednesday Volunteer

Columbarium Restoration Project Update

In March the Columbarium Restoration Project committee met with representatives of Marion Restoration Inc, who also provide training to historic masonry workers through their US Heritage Group. (Check out their interesting website: <https://www.usheritage.com/>)

We have been fortunate to work with this highly professional organization, located in Chicago, that has provided quality historic preservation services to BNC's crematorium/ columbarium building, as well as to other historic buildings throughout the United States.

The purpose of our meeting was to plan for the next phase of the building's restoration. Several possibilities are being considered. One is making



repairs to the main stairway entrance walls, referred to as "cheek walls." In addition, Marion Restoration pointed out that inadequate caulking between some of the steps was allowing water to enter into underground foundation sections. Furthermore, some of the rooftop balustrades

also showed signs of deterioration, and sections of the outdoor bell tower walls require mortar and tuckpointing work.

The committee will present options and costs to Friends board, and together we will determine our next restoration project, which we will share with you once the decision has been made. Again we thank you for your ongoing support and contributions that make these repairs restoration work possible.

Would you like to consider making a major donation to fund one of these restoration projects and receive an honorary individual plaque in the donor room in addition to recognition on our large donor board? Contact us online, or you can reach out to the project chairperson Chuck Michalek at restoration@friendsofbnc.org.

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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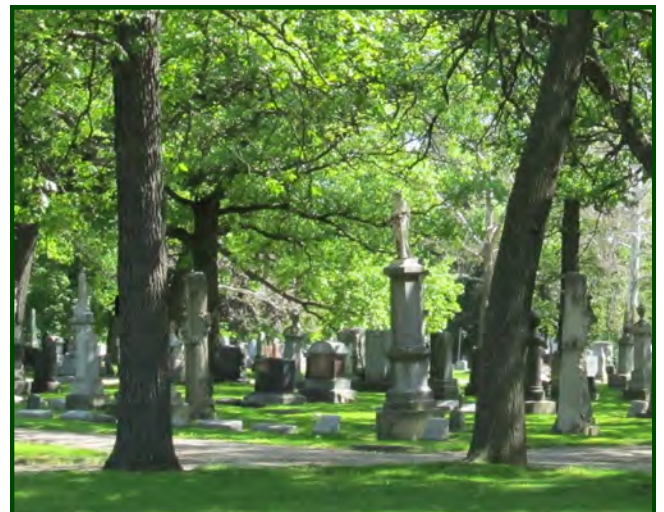
Heritage Happenings

we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



Of Note ...

August 29th
Friends Meeting
BNC's Flora & Fauna



Introduction to
Crematorium/Columbarium Building
Bohemian National Cemetery, Chicago

newly revised

"Let us remember that building will survive us, that it will stand when those who speak our beautiful Bohemian language are probably fewer in number. And if, by the cessation of our language and by the complete assimilation of our fourth or fifth generations into the American nation of one single language, the Bohemians should die out, this monument to their building will remain as a permanent marked feature of which Bohemian characteristics, the most marked feature of which courage to seek truth and to fight for liberty."
—Dr. Frantisek Iska
Cornerstone Ceremony, 1913
Evelyn Krenek Fergle, Marilyn John, Juli Nelson
Marjorie Sladek Stueckemann, Albert Walavich
Carol Jean Smetana
Revised 2021
Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery
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