

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Winter Issue ~ Vol. XX No. 3

January 2024

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

Have you ever been in the Chicago Macy's (formerly Marshall Fields) store? There is a beautiful Tiffany mosaic glass ceiling over the vaulted section of the building. It covers 6000 square feet and is made of over one million pieces of glass. Today it is as bright and lovely as when it was installed in 1907, over 100 years ago!

Bohemian National Cemetery also has a beautiful ceiling,

painted by John Mallin in the 1920s. Where is it, you say? Above the office, but not visible now because a false ceiling was installed to save energy, so now it is just a plain ceiling we see. If you were able to go up the stairs into the attic formed by this false ceiling, you could enjoy the lovely birds, flowers, and other paintings. Most probably Mallin painted these items on canvas

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World Wars I and II Memorial Project Update

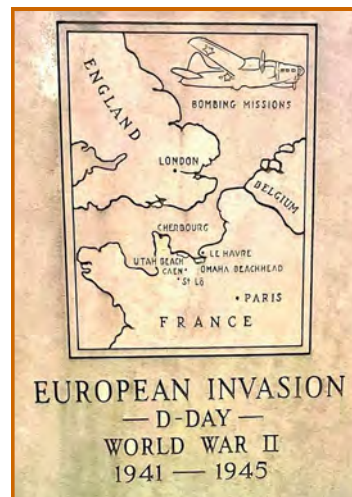


Engravings along the top of each panel of the World Wars memorial depict President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" from his 1941 State of the Union address.

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A recent newsletter from the National D-Day Memorial Foundation asked the question, "Would you believe that 72% of students are unaware of who fought in WWII?" Many of us who grew up in the decades following the world wars find it hard to believe awareness of historical events like these are



One of the memorial's panels commemorates D-Day.

disappearing from the consciousness of younger generations. As noted in previous newsletters, Friends of BNC initiated a campaign to "Help Remember our Veterans" by fundraising for the restoration of the World Wars I and II Memorial. The importance of preserving this

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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, 511B 9th St, Las Vegas, NM 87701-3911 or emailed to her at editor@friendsofbnc.org.

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from the editor's laptop



The government-supplied grave markers featured in the previous edition of Heritage Happenings were deliberately designed to provide a uniform look to our national cemeteries, and to be recognizable at a glance as military stones. They are differentiated for the most part only by the identifying information engraved on each one. The imposing monument featured in this issue's "Stories of the Stones" presents quite a contrast. But while possibly the only one of its kind at Bohemian National Cemetery, it too is not unique. I have found photos online of almost identical monuments in other cemeteries, for example, one in Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri, and another in Forest Lawn Cemetery in Buffalo, New York. And there are other monuments at BNC that feature similar Egyptian motifs, such as the Triner mausoleum.



We are offering a cemetery tour again this April. Join us, and keep on the lookout for Egyptian motifs and other interesting designs as you walk among the tombstones!

*Na shledanou!
carol*

Děkuji Vám!

Thank you to **Juli Nelson** for her many years as Membership Chair. Welcome to **Ellen Pomes**, who has volunteered as our new Membership Chair.

Thanks to **Joe Topinka** and the **Judy Baar Topinka Foundation** for hosting our

recent Zoom board meeting.

Thanks to **Chuck Michalek** for representing us at a recent event at the Czech Consulate and for preparing the report to the Czech government on our use of the 2023 grant we received from them.

Welcome to Our New Members!

Rebecca Fiala ... Brookfield IL
Lani Flesch ... Hawthorn Woods IL
Dan Sandin and Mary Rasmussen ... Chicago IL
Joseph Seliga family ... Chicago IL

What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)
that was then glued to the ceiling. He didn't paint lying on his back on scaffolding like Michelangelo!

It was in this attic when Friends first began in 2004 that we found the three busts of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Anton Cermak, and Woodrow Wilson. They had been part of special floral displays at the cemetery. We even held a contest to identify them. They are now on display in the cemetery office.

Perhaps you might wonder (as I did when we found the busts) why President Wilson would be one of this group? Wilson was very instrumental in the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 at



The original ceiling of the administration building was decorated by John Mallin in the 1920s.



the end of the First World War. Like Masaryk, he was a college professor, and the two men got along very well. I look forward to meeting

you either at our Tour of the Tombstones on Sunday, April 28 at 1:00 p.m., or at the dedication ceremony for the newly restored World Wars I and II monument on Memorial Day.

You can purchase tour tickets in advance on our website www.friendsofbnc.org. We will also sell them at the cemetery the day of the tour if there is still space available.

Check the next newsletter or our website or Facebook page for details about Memorial Day, which are being worked out in the weeks ahead!

**Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President**

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

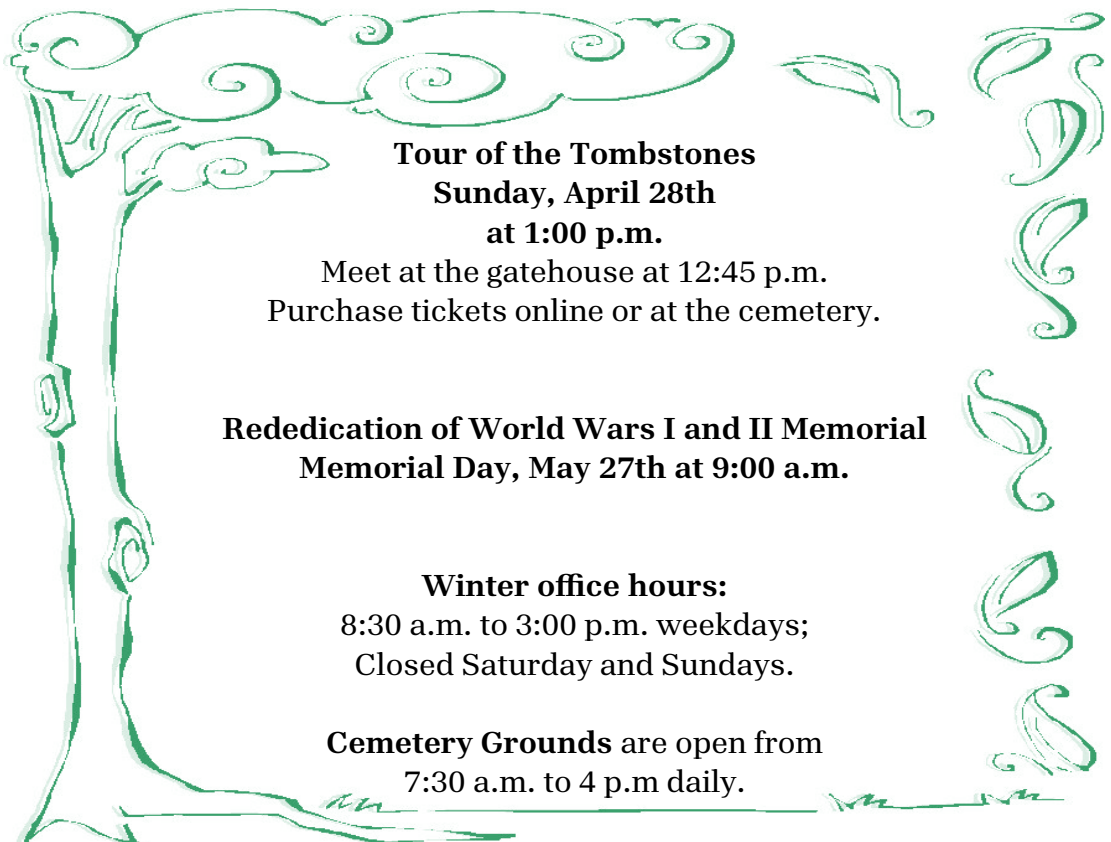
**Tour of the Tombstones
Sunday, April 28th
at 1:00 p.m.**

Meet at the gatehouse at 12:45 p.m.
Purchase tickets online or at the cemetery.

**Rededication of World Wars I and II Memorial
Memorial Day, May 27th at 9:00 a.m.**

Winter office hours:
8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. weekdays;
Closed Saturday and Sundays.

**Cemetery Grounds are open from
7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.**



Stories of the Stones: The Fuka Family Lot

by carol jean smetana

The Frank Fuka family plot at Bohemian National Cemetery (Section 16, Lot 9) has two markers. At the foot of the plot a simple granite plaque embedded in the ground is inscribed "ROD. F. FUKA." The "F." is for Frank, the family patriarch; "ROD." is the abbreviation for the Czech word *rodina*, which means family.



But it is the large granite monument on the plot that catches your attention. Its Egyptian motifs and imagery are distinctive of the Egyptian Revival style that found renewed popularity in architecture and funerary art in the decade following the 1922 discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb. The monument, with the family name executed in bas-relief across the top lintel, forms a portal representing the gateway to eternity. Above the lintel and below the



curved Egyptian cornice with its round concave molding (also known as cavetto molding) is a frieze featuring a classic Egyptian Revival image—a winged sun disk, representing the Egyptian sun god Ra. Ra was the creator of all the other gods, of humans, and indeed of all forms of life, and the sun disk symbolizes his life-giving power.

The images that form the winged sun disk have varied interpretations. The orb in the center of the motif symbolizes

the sun and can also represent the soul. The outspread wings are a symbol of protection and maternal care; there are three rows of feathers representing good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

The two cobras flanking the disk and facing away from each other represent death; in another interpretation, they symbolize good and evil, with the human soul caught in the middle, constantly needing to choose between the two. As a representation of the sun's journey, the winged sun disk symbolizes the victory of light over darkness. This idea of life everlasting is repeated in the imagery of the lotus flowers, an Egyptian symbol of rebirth, rising up the two sides of the portal. Finally, the black stone urn resting in the center is a classic symbol of death and mourning but also of immortality.

The base of the monument is engraved with the names and dates of five of the six people known to be buried in the Frank Fuka family plot:



Frank Fuka (1871-1950);
Antonie Fuka (1872-1958);
Blanche (1906-1985);
Frank [Jr] (1895-1915);
and Stanley (1894-1915).

Frank Fuka, the family patriarch from Bohemia, settled in Chicago in 1889. The following year he met Antonie Mrzena shortly after she arrived from Bohemia, and they married on February 28, 1892. They had eight children: in 1892, their firstborn son William, followed by Stanley in 1894, and Frank Jr in 1895. Their first daughter, Antonia, was born in 1898, then another son Otto in 1900, and George in 1902, followed by Blanche in 1906. Their last child, a girl Johanna born in 1908, lived for only a year.

Four of the Fuka children are buried in this lot, including Johanna, although this was not her original burial place, and she is not named on the monument. Johanna was reburied here in December 1915 to rest alongside her two brothers. They had died earlier in 1915, only three months apart.

The first to be buried here was Frank and Antonie's 19-year-old son Frank Jr. He died in the *Eastland* disaster on July 15, 1915, and was buried in the lot on July 30. Frank's obituary in the *Chicago Tribune* said that he had been an assembler at Western Electric for five years and was just beginning to find success as a professional lightweight boxer, fighting under the name "Young Hanlon."

Frank Fuka, Sr., finalized his purchase of the lot on September 30, 1915, for the



Antonio Mrzena and Frank Fuka
photo courtesy of Sue Shepherd

price of \$214 (the equivalent of about \$6,500 today). Sadly, less than two weeks later, on October 9, Frank and Antonie lost another son Stanley. The *Denni hlasatel*, the Chicago Czech daily newspaper, reported the results of the coroner's inquest into Stanley's death: it concluded that Stanley had died from being bitten by a rabid dog.

In 1942, on the occasion of Frank and Antonie Fuka's golden wedding anniversary, the *Chicago Tribune* published a their photo and noted that 200 family members and friends attended a celebration in their honor. That same photo accompanied an interview with Frank Fuka included in the Czech-American annual, *Amerikan narodní kalendář 1943*, under the title "Z paměti našich osadníků" ("From the memories of our settlers"). (A condensed version of the interview was republished in the 1951 *Kalendář*.)

In the article, Frank described his youth in Bohemia and the life he established in Chicago for himself and his family. He was born in 1871 in the village of Křída, about 35 miles north of

České Budjeovice. In 1884 he moved there to apprentice as a plasterer. When his sister Anna said she intended to immigrate to the United States, Frank decided he should go first to see what conditions were like there. In the interview Frank claimed that he was on the maiden voyage of the

Augusta Victoria, which set a record in May 1889 of crossing the Atlantic from Hamburg to New York in seven days. However, passenger lists show that he was actually on the ship's second voyage and arrived in New York on June 22, 1889. Three of Frank's brothers eventually followed him to America, but his sister Anna married a blacksmith and stayed in Bohemia.

Frank went to Chicago and worked first as a tanner and then as a molder. In 1890 he found work as a plasterer, in the construction for the upcoming Columbia Exposition, where he worked for over two years. In 1893 he bought a tavern, sold it after five years, and turned to painting bicycles (on the ship passenger list, his occupation was listed as "painter"). Then he took a series of jobs working for established companies, spending his last 15 years before his retirement in 1929 in the car painting department at Studebaker Company.

Frank died in 1950; his wife Antonie died in 1958. Their daughter Blanche, the last to be buried in the family lot, died in 1985.

DONATIONS

Benefactors

(\$1000—\$9999)

Carol Crosson *in memory of her grandparents Anton and Julia Zamostny*

Robert J. Kopecky

Carol A Krauser

Patrons

(\$500—\$999)

Glenn and Susan Spachman

Brad Suster and Hector

Hernandez

Sponsors

(\$100—\$499)

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Kay Benson

CSA Fraternal Life

Edward Kletecka *in memory of the Kletecka Family*

Joe Kolar

Kenneth Kralik

Kimberly Kubat-Martin *for all my family members buried at BNC:*

Anna Maxa Kubat(a), Anna

Antonia Kubat(a), Josef

Kubat(a), Peter Čermák,

Franziska Jankovsky Čermák,

Blanka Čermák, Jaroslav Čermák, Blanka Čermák, Anna Matoušek Kubat(a), Blanche Kubat, Frank Kubat, Blanche Kubat, Teresia Čermák Lavička Sheber, Jan Linhart, Marie Prochaska Linhart, Catherine Rejlek Linhart, John Linhart, James Rejlek, Margaret Vojik Rejlek, Marie Linhart Beneš, Alois Beneš, George Linhart, Eleanor Bureš Linhart, James T. Linhart, Dorothez Kahovec Linhart

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James Prihoda

John Purdy Jr *in memory of Walter C and Edith Vesely*

Linda and Ronald Roaks

Bill and Ruth Rosol

Sokolice Tabor *in memory of Valentine Husak*

Jerry T Souta, Jr

Cheryl Svoboda

Lorraine Szabo *in memory of George Swatik*

Carol and Gerald Vovis

Lisa Zahlmann

Donors

(\$25—\$99)

Janet Cundiff *in memory of her grandmother Lillian Prazak*

Patricia Krizek DeVoe

Raymond and Elizabeth Hemzacek

Wesley Johnston

Jeanne M Kelby

Carlotta Rotman *in memory of Cizek and Hayes families*

Sikorovsky Family Fund

Janet Smart

Diane Stroberg

Richard Sykora

Thank You

(\$1—\$24)

Carole Miller

Thank you all for your generosity.

Your donations help preserve and restore Bohemian National Cemetery.

100 Years Ago at BNC

At the March 1924 meeting of the BNCA board, chairman Jan Pecha opined that the cemetery, for its own good and in keeping with the practice of other cemeteries, should purchase an official car for use on business occasions. The board agreed and passed a resolution to purchase “one large car for seven people,” at a price not to exceed \$2,500. At the next month’s meeting, the board approved the payment of \$2599.60 for a new 1924 Buick.

Most likely the cemetery’s first official car was similar to the seven-passenger Buick sedan pictured at right, featured in the company’s brochure, “Buick for Nineteen Twenty-four.” The brochure claims: “The strength and sturdiness of its seventy horse power Buick Valve-in-Head engine with a speed that is rated at from sixty to seventy miles an hour, are reflected in the long, low body lines. ... The interior reveals the same generous proportions and the same distinctive appearance, with its plush upholstery and wide, comfortable, extra seats. ... The new windshield is perfectly weather-tight. ... It has an air deflector to insure complete ventilation without discomfort. ... And there is, of course, the additional sense of security given by the new Buick four-wheel brakes which is one of the big features that should cause you to decide in its favor.”





HAS YOUR MEMBERSHIP LAPSED?

If the back of your newsletter is stamped in red: “LAST NEWSLETTER—PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP” please use the form below or go to our website to renew now.

Your membership in Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery is vital to the preservation of our cemetery. As a member, you will receive our quarterly newsletter and be entitled to discounts on tours and merchandise. Above all, you will enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to maintain, improve and beautify Bohemian National Cemetery.

Our membership year is January - December. If the back page of this issue of your newsletter has “Last Newsletter” stamped in red, it means that **your membership expired December 31, 2023**. You will not receive another issue of *Heritage Happenings* until you renew your membership.

Please send in your renewal now! Or save a stamp and renew on our secure website <https://friendsofbnc.org>.

Memberships:

One year: \$30 individual; \$40 family;
\$25 senior

Two years: \$55 individual; \$70 family;
\$45 senior

Send renewal form with check payable to Friends of BNC or credit card information to:

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery—Membership
5255 N Pulaski Rd
Chicago IL 60630-1775

Friends of BNC is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit public charity. To make a tax-deductible donation to fund improvements at BNC, please write a separate check with a notation on the memo line. Thank you.

Membership Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code (+ 4) _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Type of Membership _____

For credit card payment (Visa, Master Card, Discover, American Express), include:

Card number _____ Expiration date _____

Security code _____ Signature _____

World Wars I and II Memorial Project Update

(continued from first page)

memorial was in part due to its eight iconic engraved sandstone panels describing significant events in the wars. The educational panels depict in cartographic form significant military campaigns during the First and Second World Wars.

Thanks to the support from members and non-members, various organizations, and a grant from the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic, our project to restore the cemetery’s World Wars I and

II Memorial is finished. All that remains is some repair work on the surrounding walkway and final landscaping to be done once spring weather arrives. The restoration of this memorial, along with the existence of BNC’s other significant war memorials, will help keep alive the memory of these events and serve as an ongoing reminder of those who served to protect our freedom.

To commemorate Memorial Day, the Bohemian National Cemetery

Association Board and Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery Board are working together to host a rededication of the World Wars I and II Memorial on Memorial Day, Monday, May 27, starting at 9 am. Watch for news of this event in the next issue of *Heritage Happenings*, or by visiting our website at www.friendsofbnc.org or our Facebook page.

Chuck Michalek
Project Coordinator

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

5255 N Pulaski Rd
Chicago IL 60630-1701

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Email: info@friendsofbnc.org
Website: www.friendsofbnc.org



Heritage Happenings January (masquerading as March) 2024



Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery Spring Tour of the Tombstones

Join us in welcoming spring on our cemetery walking tour, led by experienced guide and cemetery historian Chuck Betzold.

When: Sunday, April 28, 2024, at 1:00 pm.
Meet at the gatehouse at 12:45 pm.

Cost: \$10 for Friends members
\$20 for non-members

While reservations are not required, tickets can be purchased in advance by credit card at Friendsofbnc.org.

You can also purchase tickets on the day of the tour at the gatehouse, by check or cash.

