

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Spring Issue Vol.4, #4

April 2008

Sherida Hudak, Editor

What's new with Friends of BNC

Celebration Meeting on January 27th

Dressed in a Slovak kroje (folk costume) our accordionist serenaded 55 people at our January 27th meeting at Klas Restaurant in Cicero. A very welcome surprise guest was former Illinois State Treasurer, Judy Baar Topinka! Scenes of the national cemeteries in Prague, Vysehrad, and Lany, final resting place of T.G. Masaryk and his daughter, Alice, transported us back to the old country for our program. Thanks to Andy Bultas and Ken Dvorsky, our speakers. Ray Capek had also prepared, but due to ill health was unable to be there. We hoisted our glasses in a champagne toast to celebrate the many accomplishments of BNC/Friends, especially the grant from Partners in Preservation for the

water tank. This honor not only brought needed funds, but also raised awareness of BNC nationwide as we were ranked number eight out of 25 important historical Chicago sites.

Masaryk/Legionnaires focus for May 4th tour

Are you related to someone who was a Legionnaire? We don't mean the American Legion, but rather a group of men in World War I, Americans, Czechs, and Slovaks, who were drafted to fight for the Austrians who controlled the Czech/Slovak lands at that time. These men crossed over to fight against their oppressors. They formed at least 2 associations in Chicago in the 1920's, were delegates to BNC, marched proudly in the Memorial Day parades, and were buried/

inurned at BNC in fairly large numbers. We are trying to find as many names of these brave men as we can. Our May 4th tour is going to focus on the Legionnaires plus T.G. Masaryk and his daughter, Alice. Alice lived in Chicago. Her remains were at BNC until the fall of communism. Her name is still on the crypt. Come and see! If you have information on a Legionnaire at rest at BNC, please Email mdstueck@aol.com or call 847-362-9036.

Marge Sladek Stueckemann, President

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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Live from BNC

December was a quiet time at the cemetery, but work continued on the electrical system in the south Gatehouse. Ken Quick, Ken Dvorsky, Chuck Michalec, and Andy Bultas rewired the basement and part of the main floor. Work was stopped because

of the Christmas and New Year holidays. We also temporarily lost the assistance of Neal Roux while he recovered from an operation.

In January, Chuck Hagopian,

(Continued on page 2)



Upcoming events

Thursday, May 1st 7:00 P.M.

Movie at Chicago History Museum

1601 N. Clark St.

Chicago

*Accidental Army-The Amazing Story of the
Czechoslovak Legion*

Free

Call 773-871-1179 to register

Saturday, May 3rd 6:00 P.M.

Dinner at Klas Restaurant

5734 W. Cermak Rd.

Cicero

*Celebration dinner with entertainment and
another screening of Accidental Army*

\$25

Call Klas, 708-652-0795 to make a
reservation, pay there

Sunday, May 4th 1:00-3:00 P.M.

Walking Tour at BNC

Meet in the gatehouse for a wonderful tour of the highlights of BNC with a focus on T.G. and Alice Masaryk and the Legionnaires. Descendants of Legionnaires will be honored during Czech refreshment time following the tour. Call 847-362-9036 or email info@friendsofbnc if you know of a Legionnaire at rest at BNC.

\$10 for Friends of BNC \$15 for non-members

Note: This tour will be part of events of Czecho de Mayo. Come join the celebration of Chicago's contribution to a free and independent Czechoslovakia, in honor of T.G. Masaryk's visit to Chicago on May 5, 1918, when 150,000 Chicagoans came to greet him.

Live from BNC

(Continued from page 1)

Phil Roux, and Beth Raleigh met with Partners in Preservation at their downtown offices. A contractor was named to do the work on the water tower and should begin in the spring.

Work had to be stopped on the stained glass windows in the Columbarium. Phil Roux felt that the color white that was being used would not be approved by the state historical society. Phil contacted the society and sent them a picture of the shade of white that Bovard was using. Bovard was the successful bidder for window restoration. The society deemed it unacceptable. Phil then contacted Bovard to inform them of the society's decision. Bovard sent Phil new colors, which Phil in turn forwarded to the society. They chose a bronze color. Phil informed Bovard, but also told them to wait until the approval from the

society was received in writing. This work is expected to begin in spring. Other work in the Columbarium included the installation of a new ceiling in the room where the new retort will be. Ken Quick and Andy Bultas also started work on the electrical system that is needed for the new retort.

As everyone knows this has been an extremely severe winter. There have been bitter snow storms and blizzards. The cemetery was short-handed, but Phil Roux and Nora Wilson have been working hard plowing to keep the roads open. With the help of Lucijan Puczta they have also kept up with the burials.

February has been just as bad as January as the snow continued to fall and the weather continued to be bitterly cold. Thanks to Phil, Nora, and Lucijan the cemetery remains operable. We also welcome William Casey who has been hired to assist with outdoor

work. Even though the winter has been harsh the cemetery looks good. It is beautiful to see



the white covering the trees and monuments, but everyone is looking forward to spring.

Andy Bultas

The Bohemian Sharpshooters

Introduction

Urban workers of America were beginning to flex their political muscle during the decade of the 1870's. Small groups of Chicago immigrants formed armed self-defense clubs to protect themselves during confrontations with the local police and military troops. The workers were tired of having their lawful meeting places disrupted by the authorities, as well as being physically intimidated at the polls or at social gatherings.

Major cities like Chicago, New York, Cincinnati and St. Louis all formed self-defense organizations. The Germans had their Lehr-und-Vehr (Education and Defense Society) and the Jaeger Verein. The Lehr-und-Vehr drilled at Schuetzen Park, outside the city limits at the time. Schuetzen Park would eventually become the site of Riverview Amusement Park. The Irish formed the Irish Labor Guards, dressed in green worsted attire. And the Bohemian Sharpshooters always stood out in their grey dress uniforms.

Each of these groups drilled with rifles, pistols, sabers and bayonets. They held shooting contests and mock battles. They provided security at their respective ethnic picnics and sponsored events.

At the time there were fears that armed socialist workers could attempt to take over the country. In reality, the workers, like other classes, simply wished to lawfully arm and protect themselves from lawlessness, while preserving their constitutional rights.

However, the general public and wealthy businesses perceived armed ethnic socialist groups as a threat to American society. In 1879, the State of Illinois enacted a law barring all armed militia groups from drilling or parading together without a permit. In addition, a new state militia was created and designated as the Illinois National Guard, the only militia authorized to arm themselves and assemble in public.

The Bohemian Sharpshooters

The Bohemian Sharpshooters were organized in 1874 and first known as Company C, Third Regiment. During the Great Railroad Strike

and Riot of 1877—the United States' first nationwide strike—scores of workers were injured and killed during blood-soaked confrontations between police and enraged mobs. Most

of the action occurred at the Halsted Street viaduct, at nearby 16th Street, at Halsted and 12th, and on Canal Street. During these riots the Bohemian Sharpshooters were stripped of their armament by local authorities. When things quieted down the guns were returned and the Sharpshooters were permitted to drill and assemble as before.

By 1879 the Bohemian Sharpshooters found themselves in the middle of the impending militia law controversy, scheduled to go into effect on July 1st.

On June 22nd the Sharpshooters' services were requested by the organizers of the St. Wenceslaus school picnic. School authorities had attempted to obtain police protection for the event but were turned down causing the involvement of the Sharpshooters that day.

The picnic was held at Silver Leaf Grove, a popular picnic/beer garden/shooting competition area. Today it's hard to imagine a combination of beer, guns and school children but such was the case in Chicago during the summer of 1879.

On the day of the picnic a volunteer company of Sharpshooters was assembled to escort civilians from the school to the picnic grove and to guard the gates. At the time there were a total of 26 Sharpshooters in the company, but only 19 were present at the beginning of the picnic. The company was led by Captain Prokop Hudek. Second in command was First Lieutenant Ladweic. The Sharpshooters were armed that day with old Springfield muskets and 5 homemade cartridges apiece. Each cartridge contained nine buckshot. Each man also carried a bayonet.

Silver Leaf Grove was located at Ogden and



Western Avenues, not far from the present day University of Illinois Hospital Complex. The grove was patronized by various Socialistic organizations at the time. Almost every picnic there was

plagued by a rough crowd of thugs who would attempt to enter the picnic grounds without paying admission. These intruders not only picked pockets but picked fights and disrupted the ethnic groups assembled there.

Sunday, June 22nd, was no different than any other Sunday at Silver Leaf Grove. By mid-day groups of drunken outsiders were already causing trouble. Captain Hudek of the Sharpshooters had become ill after arriving at the picnic grove and left early to go home to rest. First Lieutenant Ladweic was left in charge.

Versions of what happened next would vary.

Chuck Betzold

Look for your next issue of Heritage Happenings for the rest of the Sharpshooter story. Meanwhile, if you have any information about the Bohemian Sharpshooters, call 773-369-9296, or email, cbetzold@tribune.com, Chuck Betzold.

Welcome New Members

Kristyna Driehaus
 Judie Mason
 Kathy Perfect
 Michael & Joanne Petros
 Judy Baar Topinka
 Rose Vytlacil
 Alan & Cheryl Zak

Donor list

Benefactor \$1,000 & more

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Henrietta Pons

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Linda Uhlir

Donor \$25-\$99

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Dr Charles Knop
Barbara Kostka
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Cecilia Kumarich
Frank Kurhayez
James Lagocki
Elaine LaMiaux
Alderwoman Margaret Laurino

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Lodge Anton Cermak #99
Lodge Yankee Jungman #77 CSA
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Stanley Loula
Charles & Sue Lupinek
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(Continued on page 5)

Donors (continued)

(Continued from page 4)

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 Alois Vana
 Adeline Vanerka
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 Christine Repa Visconti
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Wayne Wolf, in memory of Francis Kard,
 Emil G Wolf former delegates of BNC
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 Rosemary Ziska

Thank You \$1-\$24

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Ken & Jan Klouzer
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 Patt Salvino
 Vlasta Schlehofer
 Tom Shvachta
 Arnold Spravka
 Lorraine Velek
 Lillian Zoufal

Once again, thank you for making a real difference for BNC.

GoodSearch—a new kind of Google/Yahoo

If you have a computer, you probably have used Google or maybe Yahoo to search the web. Now you can help Friends of BNC by using a different search engine, GoodSearch. Each time you do a search, GoodSearch makes a one cent donation.

Using GoodSearch is simple. Because the site is powered by Yahoo, users are assured of high quality results—but each time you search, money is generated by the advertisers for Friends of BNC.

From the GoodSearch homepage at

<http://www.goodsearch.com> enter your search term as you normally would. Under the question “Who do you goodsearch for?” enter “Friends of BNC.” Click on “verify” and then click on “search.” That’s all it takes for your search to be of benefit.



Dekuji vam—thank you very much

Thank you to the generous donors to the 2007—2008 campaign to restore the Columbarium/Crematorium. Work is proceeding now, especially on the windows.

Thanks to John Persic for sharing historic Czech pictures which raised funds for the Columbarium.

Thanks to all who contacted their representatives/senators regarding the Czech Caucus, an initiative in Congress to cement Czech-American relations. It was successfully begun on February 27th.

Thanks to Nancy Leginski for repairing flags.

Thanks to Chuck Betzold for restoring a photo of the Sharpshooters and 2 other historic pictures which are on display at the office.

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

611 Harvard Lane
Libertyville, IL 60048
Phone: 847-362-9036
E-mail: mdstueck@aol.com



Heritage Happenings

We're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



More events at BNC

Sunday, May 11th 1:00 P.M.

Mother's Day

Meet in front of the Columbarium for a rededication of Albin Polasek's "Mother" statue by a representative of the Polasek family or foundation. Tea sandwiches, cookies, etc., in Gatehouse to follow. Roses in honor of mothers/grandmothers will be available for about \$5.00. Order in advance if you would like a relative remembered in a special booklet. Call 847-362-9036 or email info@FriendsofBNC.org to be assured of a rose. The flowers will decorate the table and then be taken by families.



Week of May 19th—23rd

Help us place flags on veterans' graves
(go to office first)

Friday, May 23rd 10:00 A.M.

Join Friends of BNC to place flags and go out for lunch.

Monday, May 26th 9:15 A.M.
Memorial Day

Meet in the office.
Ceremony in chapel will honor all branches of service with special music, speakers, TAPS, Sokol, etc.

Mark Your Calendar

Sunday, August 3rd

Special picnic at BNC!

We'll have live music from the Czech Republic, a wonderful Dixieland Jazz group. Food, of course. Under a tent in the area opposite the Civil War monument. This will be our August Friends meeting.

Saturday, October 4th
10:00 A.M. & 1:00 P.M.

Walking Tours
\$10 for members \$15 for non-members