

# Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue  
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July 2008  
Sherida Hudak, Editor

## What's new with Friends of BNC

"Tour the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum? We haven't done that yet," said guide Albert Walavich when we proposed adding that to our May 4th tour.

Since this tour included the commemoration of T.G. Masaryk, first President of Czechoslovakia, we wanted to see the relief plaque of him plus the crypt with daughter, Alice Masarykova's name. This celebration tour attracted 75 people, including member Robert Doubek from Washington, D.C. and visitors from New York state and Texas! We were featured on Channel 5 news the week before thanks to our terrific Publicity Chair, Anna Schnedorf. Our tour was part of events that weekend which included a screening of the documentary on the Czech Legion, and a dinner at Klas

Restaurant—all of which celebrated the 90th anniversary of the triumphant visit of T.G. Masaryk to Chicago on May 5, 1918. The Czech Legion included Czech and Slovak men who crossed over to fight against Austria in World War I. Afterwards, men of Czech and Slovak heritage who fought in the U.S. armed forces against Austria joined in with their countrymen to form a veteran's organization, the Chicago Czecho-Slovak Legionnaires. We did our best to locate Legionnaires at rest at BNC. With the help of Marie Jensen and Anne Dusek, plus a wonderful document in Czech which provided names, we were able to locate a total of 30 men. An 8-page colored booklet was produced and given to all present listing these brave men with short biographies

of some. It included a short history translated from the Czech language by Angie Bultas. Proud descendants included Friends members Ellen Jean Schnabl from Wisconsin, Wayne Peterson from California and our own Juli Nelson. All three were honored at the refreshment hour and given a small ceramic piece from the Czech Republic as a remembrance. Another descendant, Geraldine Coates, was also present for the tour but not at the ceremony. If you have not been to a tour of BNC, do come on October 4th at either 10:00 A.M. or 1:00 P.M. and see for yourself how much you will learn about our marvelous cemetery!!

**Marge Sladek Stueckemann**

## Live from BNC

Ken Quick, Andy Bultas and Ken Dvorsky finished installing new electrical wiring and piping in the basement of the Administration Building.

In April the cemetery received bad news regarding the Water Tower restoration project. The

City of Chicago delayed the issuance of the permit to work on the tower. Chuck Hagopian and Alderman Margaret Laurino worked to resolve the matter with the city. Thanks to them the permit for the restoration has

*(Continued on page 2)*

### 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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## Upcoming events

Sunday, August 3, 2008  
Noon until 4:00 P.M.

Bohemian National Cemetery Association invites you to the **Vice President's Picnic** at BNC, 5255 N. Pulaski, Chicago

Help celebrate the revival of a tradition that dates back to the earliest years of BNC!

Music by the Junior Dixieland Jazz Band from the Czech Republic.

Refreshments will be available for purchase including Klas' famous potato pancakes and authentic Czech pastries.

Friends of BNC will sponsor the bakery and coffee booth. Baked goods and workers (one hour shifts) gladly accepted!

The office and Columbarium will be open for those wanting to find information or visit the family niche that day. Possibly there will be a bus coming from Brookfield and/or Cicero for a nominal cost.

For more information call 847-362-9036

Sunday, September 21, 2008  
1:00 P.M.

Membership Meeting and Elections  
Columbarium/Crematorium chapel with refreshments in the gatehouse

Our program:

"Chicago Rocks: Geology of Bohemian National Cemetery"

by Jean Hemzacek Laukant

Join us for an informative, illustrated talk about the "rocks" that make up our beautiful monuments. After viewing the images, we will take a short walk on our way to the gatehouse to actually view some of them. Jean is a geology professor at our neighboring Northeastern Illinois University.

All are welcome to this free event!

Saturday, October 4, 2008  
10:00 A.M.—noon and 1:00—3:00 P.M.

Fall Walking Tours of BNC led by  
Albert Walavich

Will include a short visit to the Columbarium provided no funeral is planned.

Come and see how terrific the stained glass windows look plus the vibrant colors of the Pilsen Butcher's window.

\$10 for Friends members

\$15 for non-members

Czech refreshments in the gatehouse following each tour

## Live from BNC

*(Continued from page 1)*

now been issued and work will begin soon.

Restoration of the Columbarium windows is complete. The Pilsen Butchers window in the east wing was also restored. It is a must see.

On May 11, 2008 the cemetery held a ceremony celebrating the 100 year anniversary of Mother's Day. The ceremony was held in front of Albin Polasek's statue of The Mother. It was a rainy and dismal day but about 30 people attended. Because of the weather the ceremony had to be taken inside to the north Gatehouse.

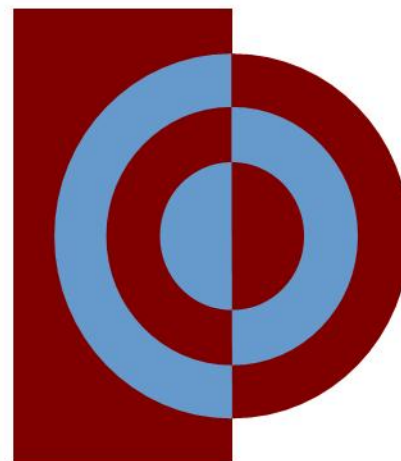
The cemetery had a surprise visit by a famous Texan, Rudy (Tim) Mikeska. Tim's family has been in Texas for over 100 years. The Mikeska's are called the First Family of Texas Barbeque. They are also known to be the largest makers of Bohemian sausages. You

can check Tim's claim at his company's website at [www.mikeska.com/](http://www.mikeska.com/). Tim does have some family buried at Bohemian National Cemetery.

Memorial Day services were held on May 26th. The people gathered at the Administration Building where coffee and koláčky were served. The parade began at the Administration Building and proceeded to the Columbarium. It was led by the color guard from Sokol Spirit. The services started with the posting of the colors and the Pledge of Allegiance was given by Amy E. Kucera from the T.G. Masaryk school. The Czech speaker was Vladimir Holecck. The English speaker was Charles Hagopian. A Czech poem was recited by Milena A. Bermanova, also of T.G. Masaryk school. Many people were in attendance including Alderman Margaret Laurino and Czech Deputy Consul

Frantisek Gal. This year the Odd Fellows services were held outdoors by their monument.

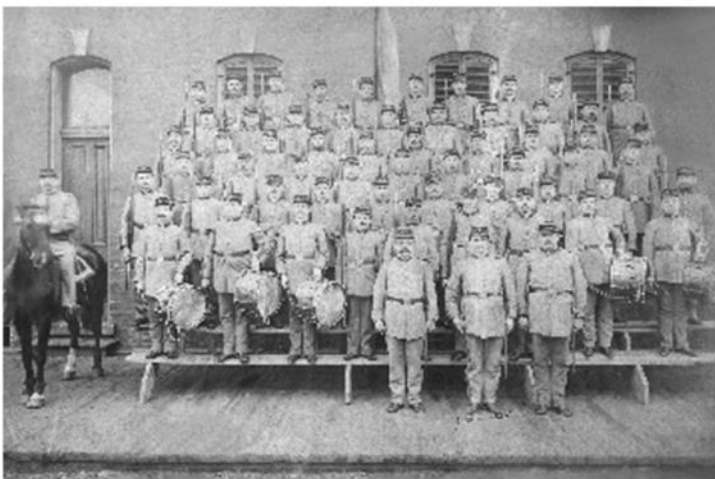
**Andy Bultas**



## The Bohemian Sharpshooters

*The first portion of this article appeared in our previous spring edition.*

*Along with other ethnic self-defense organizations Bohemian Sharpshooters formed in the 1870's. Due to previous strikes and riots, by 1879 they were in the middle of the impending militia law controversy, scheduled to take effect on July 1st. On June 22nd the Sharpshooter's services were requested by the organizers of the St. Wenceslaus school picnic to be held at Silver Leaf Grove. By mid-day groups of drunken outsiders were already causing trouble.*



Versions of what happened next would vary.

One initial report claims that during a dance on the grounds a fight broke out between one of the Sharpshooters and an uninvited civilian named Volney Clark. Clark was severely beaten and escorted off the property. The crowd outside the gates was sympathetic to Clark. They responded with violence. Some said that only sticks and stones were thrown back into the enclosed grounds. Others reported revolvers being fired toward the picnic goers and Sharpshooters.

Lieutenant Ladwicz ordered his men to load their guns and fix bayonets, in an attempt to move the gathering crowd away from the grounds. He ordered 12 men to quickly assemble outside the grounds to push the crowd back. More stone throwing ensued. Sharpshooters rushed the crowd, using their

bayonets and eventually firing their muskets. The gang of thugs responded by retreating with their wounded. The Sharpshooters were then ordered to stack their weapons, so as to not incite further violence when the police arrived.

Here again the story varies at each turning point. Some said that Ladwicz gave the order to fire on the crowd. Ladwicz said that he never gave that order. He claimed he merely meant to intimidate the crowd by charging toward them. Some said that a single volley of musket fire was heard. Others claim that shots were fired irregularly. There was even testi-

mony that the Sharpshooters had fired, reloaded and fired again.

Six civilians were wounded by gunfire. It was initially thought that one or two of the seriously wounded would probably die. Others received lesser wounds from bayonets or by saber. None of the Sharpshooters were even scratched.

Two squads of police arrived shortly after the incident as the Sharpshooters willingly surrendered. They were arrested and formed into a marching group, heading off to the Madison Street police station, carrying the American flag the entire route. A crowd of 2,000 excited citizens followed the procession of both the Sharpshooters and the rioters who were also arrested. In a twist of irony, the police were now protecting the defenseless Sharpshooters from harm.

Of the nineteen Sharpshooters that began the day at Silver Grove, Captain Hudek (absent because of illness) and one other Sharpshooter were the only ones not arrested. Some accounts begin the day with 20 Sharpshooters and two listed as not being arrested. The following is a list of the seventeen known arrested:

- 1st Lieutenant, Frank Ladwicz, 33 years old
- 2nd Lieutenant, Charles Raus, 29 years
- John C. Cadweck, 25 years
- John Raichart, 17 years
- Frank Nemick, 32 years
- Frank Koperly, 19 years
- James Nachman, 18 years
- John Hauglik, 23 years
- Frank Yanski, 20 years
- John Neska, 18 years
- Joseph Herek, 19 years
- Martin Cesal, 23 years
- John Dalzal, 22 years
- Michael Homelki, 22 years
- August Zedek, 18 years
- Frank Schmidt, 29 years
- James Martin, 22 years

The youngest in the group, 17-year-old John Raichart, signed his name to the picture that recently resurfaced at Bohemian National Cemetery. Accounts of his exploits at the picnic grove were found in articles dated June 23, 1879 in both the Chicago Daily Tribune and the New York Times. The New York Times misspelled John's last name with two t's. The BNC picture with his signature verifies the correct spelling.

There is much more to this story. I've only had time to summarize the first part of this fascinating tale. There were follow up newspaper articles, detailing the conditions of the wounded; court appearances; testimony; public opinions; and other Sharpshooter information that appeared day after day that summer in 1879. I hope to incorporate those additional facts to complete the story for an upcoming edition.

If you have any information about the Bohemian Sharpshooters, please give me a call or drop me a line.

**Chuck Betzold**  
**cbetzold@tribune.com**  
**773-369-9296**

## Election September 21st

Our greatest thanks to our superb outgoing secretary, Meribeth Tooke, whose minutes and business expertise were so valuable to our board. We will miss you, Meribeth. Thanks to Gladys Wheeler who is our very enthusiastic appointed secretary who will be running for election. Our heartfelt thanks to outgoing publicity chair, Anna Schnedorf, who garnered coverage for Friends of BNC from the major TV networks, the Chicago Tribune and so many other venues. Anna, you will be greatly missed. This position is now open.

Help Needed:

We need someone who is willing to be our Publicity Chair. This would include: creating and distributing flyers for Friends activities, writing and distributing press releases regarding activities and events. Providing text of these events for the website, attending the monthly board meeting held on either the third or fourth Wednesday evening. Computer and writing skills are a must, along with email. If you are interested, please contact Juli Nelson at [nut4travel@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nut4travel@sbcglobal.net) or AFTER July 1st Marge Stueckemann at 847-362-9036 or by email at [mdstueck@aol.com](mailto:mdstueck@aol.com).

The voting will be held Sunday, September 21st, at 1:00 P.M., in the Columbarium prior to our program.

All members in good standing are eligible to vote. If 3 members sign a petition to place another name on the ballot for any of the elected positions, there can be a nomination from the floor, providing the potential candidate has agreed.

We will be electing the 4 officers and 3 directors. The other positions are appointed for one year. Thanks to our hard-working board members who are willing to continue to serve.

## Columbarium/crematorium restoration update

The windows are complete and paid for! The protective outer glass has been installed, all 9 windows have been cleaned, re-leaded, repaired and reinstalled. The Pilsen Butcher window was also removed and repainted. We had 5 families donate \$5,000 each and we received a grant from the Minister of Finance from the Czech Republic for \$14,000 and the remaining balance was paid by donations made direct to the cemetery.

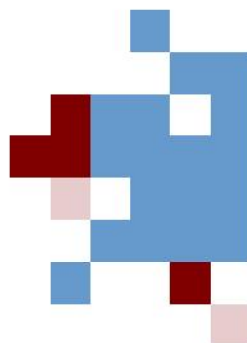
The roof work is complete and we are halfway to our goal. We have received generous donations totaling \$32,561.50 leaving us just over halfway, with a balance of \$31,340.50 left to pay. If you wish to make a donation, please mail your check to: Juli Nelson, 300 Claymoor #2F, Hinsdale, IL 60521-5076. Please make your check to Friends of BNC and note on the check that it is for the restoration fund.

The Friends Board is contemplating a 5th

Anniversary celebration in the fall of 2009. We are thinking of using this to kick-off our campaign to raise the \$400,000 needed to do the interior restoration. If you are interested in helping organize this please contact Juli Nelson at [nut4travel@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nut4travel@sbcglobal.net) or AFTER July 1st Marge Stueckemann at 847-362-9036 or by email at [mdstueck@aol.com](mailto:mdstueck@aol.com).

### Welcome New Members

- Elsie Gast
- Barbara Hoffman
- Diane Macdonald
- Susan Meyers
- Diane Mytys
- Cathy Perfect
- Wayne Peterson
- Helene Schaeffer
- Eileen Sejnost
- Susan Smyth-Tucker & Ray Tucker
- Kristine Vanko
- Louise Vanko
- Jeanne Zasadil



### Shop and Share

Thanks to all who participated by shopping at Jewel. Friends received over \$300 for our treasury to help restore BNC.

## Robert H. Vickers

Many people buried at Bohemian National Cemetery have interesting stories to tell. This is one of them.

On April 3, 1897, attorney and author Robert H. Vickers decided to end his life. Vickers shot himself with a revolver at nine o'clock in the morning. A report of the event in the Chicago Tribune stated that Vickers had an "illness of pulmonary nature" which left him despondent. He left behind a pencil-written note: "I cannot endure this awful condition."

With little money and no known relations, he was unceremoniously buried in a potter's field at Forest Park's Forest Home Cemetery.

R.H. Vickers, as he is known in his writing, was not a Bohemian. Born in Ireland in 1830, Vickers later immigrated to the United States and earned a law degree from the University

of Michigan in 1875. Around 1881 he relocated to Chicago.

Intelligent and thoughtful, Vickers was an occasional contributor to the Chicago Tribune, writing articles on the subjects of law and history. It was said that he could easily read Persian, Hebrew, Greek and Sanskrit. What won him fame in the Bohemian community, though, was his wide-ranging work as an author. Vickers' books included *Fiat Silver*, a book about coinage, *The Powers and Duties of Police Officers and Coroners*, *Zawis and Kunigunde, a Bohemian Tale*, and most notably, *A History of Bohemia*.

*Bohemia*, published in 1894 by a Chicago publishing house, was an 800 page history advertised as "the first adequate history of Bohemia in English." The book originally

sold for \$3.50 (Today a copy in mint condition sells for \$335.00 on abebooks.com) and was purported to be in the homes of Bohemians throughout Chicago. Not only did the book tell the Bohemian story to English-speakers, but it was also said to help dispel some of the negative stereotypes about Bohemians that were being circulated at the time.

Six months after his first burial at Forest Home Cemetery, the Bohemian National Cemetery had Vickers body exhumed and moved to a place of prominence in the Patriots' Circle in a ceremony on October 17, 1897. A crowd of 2,000 people were reported in attendance. The area is now known as Klacel Circle.

**Susan Golland**

## Dekuji vam—thank you very much

Thanks to those who placed flags for Memorial Day: Barbara Hoffman, John Jacobs, Nancy & Bruno Leginski, Pat Mrazek and Henrietta Pons.

Thanks to Martha and Chuck Cervenka for their work in being sure the flagpole flowers (paid for by Friends) look as good as always! We appreciate the staff's help in the actual planting.

Thanks to Ken Dvorsky and Judie Mason for organizing the "Join Hands Day" clean-up at BNC on Saturday April 26th. Lodges and organizations participating included the following: CSA Lodges Harrison, Edison, DuPage, Brookfield, R.T. Crane, and Garfield-Midwest. Members of CSAGSI and Friends of BNC also took part. Thank you for your help! It was much appreciated.

Special thanks to Kimberly Silhan who created a lovely basket of silk flowers to decorate the mantel in the gatehouse.

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# Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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Libertyville, IL 60048  
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E-mail: mdstueck@aol.com



## *Heritage Happenings*

**We're on the web**  
**[www.friendsofbnc.org](http://www.friendsofbnc.org)**

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## Book sale

### *Czechs of Chicagoland*

by Malynne Sternstein

This profusely illustrated 127-page book gives a wonderful glimpse of the history of the Chicago Czechs beginning with the story of the initial settlement behind the infamous O'Leary's in 1871. See many scenes of Pilsen, Lawndale, Cicero and Berwyn. From the desolation of the 1915 Eastland disaster, in which hundreds of victims were of Czech descent, to Cermak's triumphant election, read how the Czech community has shaped and continues to shape the course of Chicago's history. Find your ancestors in the many pictures of Sokol and Sokolice, theater and singing groups, lodges, bands and even the Bohemian Sharpshooters. Bohemian National Cemetery has 3 photos including one of the historic water tower, a copy of a

historic post card and the delegates from 1937.

Member price is just \$18 (\$20 list) and if you would like to have a copy mailed to you, please send a check for \$23 (\$18 + \$5 shipping) payable to Friends of BNC. Mail your order to our treasurer,

Juli Nelson

200 Claymoor, #2F

Hinsdale, IL 60521

Please include your name and address and a copy will come right away! Copies will also be available during refreshments at our September 21st meeting.

