

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Winter Issue Vol. 5 #3

January 2009

Sherida Hudak, Editor

What's new with Friends of BNC

"It's about him," Albert said at our October 4th tour. "Him" was St. Joseph who stands just a bit east of the gatehouse. "What's the name of the deceased?" It was Joseph, of course, and that helps explain that if you see a man's statue as a monument, it commemorates the deceased. The lovely "littering ladies" who are dropping flowers aren't the deceased women but figures of memory. We have so many fascinating stories about the monuments and the rich symbolism they contain. The woman who created our beautiful bookmarks, Lana Gits, was working on a pamphlet about symbols at BNC. The board decided that we would expand her work and create a new book focused on the history, monuments, and interesting

stories of our "residents." If you like to write, please let us know; there are more than enough stories to be researched and presented.

The new book, *Czechs of Chicagoland*, is being offered in the office, by mail (\$18 + \$5 shipping for members), and at our events. It has been such a big seller we have reordered 3 times. Don't miss this treasure of pictures and stories of our Chicago Czech ancestors. Partly because of our proceeds from this book and partly thanks to tour fees and dues, we were able to give a generous donation to BNC to replace the flood-damaged electrical connection for the Columbarium/Crematorium. We also bought 400+energy-efficient bulbs to replace all the old ones and brighten the chapel. Thanks

to Andy Bultas, Chuck Cervenka, Ken Quick, and the cemetery personnel, who washed all the reflectors, too.

Barbara Hoffman and Judie Mason are helping the board to plan our gala dinner scheduled for Poretta's Elegant Banquets in Chicago on Sunday, October 11th, 2009. Mark your calendar. We'll be celebrating our 5th birthday as Friends of BNC. May you have a healthy and happy new year. I hope to greet you personally at our January 25th meeting at Klas Restaurant.

Marge Sladek Stueckemann

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

Inside this issue:

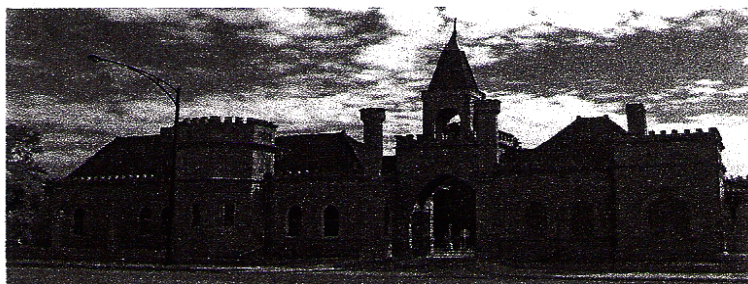
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Live from BNC

The weekend of September 11th 2008 was disastrous to both Bohemian National Cemetery and the city of Chicago. The continuous rain caused the Chicago River to overflow, causing flooding in the cemetery and the city. Foster Avenue was

flooded so badly that canoes had to be used to get people out. The water in the cemetery engulfed the garage, bungalows, water tower, pump house, administration building, shed, and Columbarium. The water

(Continued on page 2)



Dekuji vam

Joseph Calek and Albert Walavich for sending generous checks for the Friends' treasury. The money will be used to purchase the wonderful homemade kolace for meetings/tours.

Al Avery, Rita Gonzalez and Ben Wilson for coming to place flags on veterans' graves on November 7th.

Sher Hudak for her excellent work as our newsletter editor. We are really going to miss you and Eddie, too, as our newsletter team.

Eddie Otto for helping with the mailing of the newsletters.

Carol Jean Smetana for coming onboard as our new editor. Welcome!

Chuck Cervenka for purchasing the light bulbs donated by Friends.

Everyone who has generously responded to our letter for donations for Columbarium restoration. Your help makes so much

difference.

Donna Desai who served so well as our delegate to the BNCA Assembly of



Delegates. Welcome, Gladys Wheeler, who will now serve.

All those who use "Good Search" on their computer. We earned \$17.34 this year.

To our committee to write a new book about BNC's history and monuments.....Susan Golland; Marilyn John, photographer; Juli Nelson; Helene Schaefer; Carol Jean Smetana, editor; Marge Sladek Stueckemann, Linda Tassin, and Al Walavich. If you'd like to be added to this committee, please email mdstueck@aol.com or call 847 362-9036.

There is also a thank you to us. In the form of a letter to "Friends" from Elizabeth Raleigh, BNC General Manager.

Dear Friends,

Thank you for helping us with the electric work for the Columbarium. And for everything you do to help our cemetery, we are truly grateful.

Beth

Live from BNC

(Continued from page 1)

level in the east bungalow was a foot and a half deep. In the Administration Building it was an inch and a half high. The water didn't reach the interior of the Columbarium, but was about three feet from the rear door. The cemetery sustained damage, the worst being the loss of electric power to the Columbarium. Ken Quick and Andy Bultas made a temporary connection to restore power. The electric power to the Columbarium runs underground and the water caused the loss of power. This temporary connection will have to be in place until estimates from electrical contractors can be obtained.

The lettering on the water tower has been completed, allowing for the tank service company to complete their work.

Ken Quick, Andy Bultas, and Ken Dvorsky

installed a new gas line between the pump house and the garage. The heaters were lit and the garage now has heat. Chuck Michalek disconnected the gas line to the water tower and is working on the stair case railings and steps leading to the water tank.

John Radu Illse and Daniel Burice, heating and air conditioning professional; have installed new furnaces and air conditioners in the center and west bungalows. John is also working on remodeling the center and west bungalows. He is primarily concentrating on the center bungalow, because he wishes to be moved in soon.

Construction has begun on the Cubs wall. The wall itself has almost been completed. The stained glass and niches will be worked on and the entire project may be completed by winter.

A lighting and electric company has begun work on the electric problem in the Columbarium. The electric power from the pump house to the Columbarium was installed overhead. It was determined that this would be the best way to avoid trouble in case of future flooding. This same company will do electric work on the bungalows. The bungalows have always had one meter for all three units, but now 100 amp service boxes and meters will be installed for each bungalow.

Ken Quick, Andy Bultas, and Ken Dvorsky continue to work on electrical projects around the cemetery.

Andy Bultas

Monumental musings

One thing I am always able to explain to visitors to Bohemian National is the fact that there are so many rare and unique monuments in the cemetery. I have previously discussed some of the great rarities in these pages, but today I am inviting you to join me on a mini tour of several of the columbaria in BNC.

Yes, I know, there has already been some good discussion and documentation of the grand columbarium/crematorium that is such a treasure for Bohemian National. Today, however, we will discuss some of the wonderful individual family columbaria to be found on the cemetery grounds.

First stop on our tour is at the Spatny family columbarium in Section 3. The eastward facing upright monument is of very dark grey granite with a very elaborate bronze door. The door contains a number of images, including a printing press and quill pens. While I must admit that I do not know who the Spatnys were or what they did (though a good guess would be that they were involved in the printing trade), I can still delight in this very subtle monument with the obvious printing allusions as well as the poppies of sleep and some delightful roses.

Moving back to the west and just behind the Spanish American War monument we come upon the large grey upright monument of the Kec family with a simple bronze door showing

a wreath surrounding an upright flaming torch. Flame is of course an appropriate image to have on the door of a receptacle for cremains, but the dual purpose is to show that there is eternal life in flames. Surrounding the door are carved climbing roses symbolic of virtue.

Nearly at the northwest corner of Section 15 we find the grey granite columbarium of Rodina Karel Vesely. The monument has oak leaves (a symbol of strength) carved in the granite and a bronze door with a lighted oil lamp again offering us a symbol of the eternal flame of eternal life.

Our last stop on today's journey is the M. Hajek columbarium along the eastern edge of Block 1 Section B. This grey granite monument contains elaborate detail befitting a monument of far greater size. The general shape of the stone is that of an Egyptian building with inward sloping walls leading to a cap roof. Just under this capstone is one of the finest carvings in the cemetery of the winged sun disc sporting two cobras. The winged sun disc is an ancient symbol from Egypt and last year I had an Egyptologist explain that the image discusses two Egyptian legends about order and protection. The disc represents the sun god Ra who travels through the sky bringing light and life to the world but also overseeing the happenings of the world. According to the first of the legends, one day

Ra was made aware of a problem in a part of the earth far from where he was. It would have taken him too long to arrive at the point of trouble, but the winged falcon god Horus offered to fly Ra upon his back so that he could get there more quickly and solve the problem. The two little snakes on either side of the disc come from a second legend about the time that a great serpent one day told Ra that he would swallow him should he continue to fly over him. Not wanting to be swallowed, Ra decided not to travel through the sky and there was no light upon the earth. After a few days of total darkness, some of the creatures of the earth went to Ra and asked why he did not fly, and, when he explained the threat from the serpent, two cobras offered to protect Ra by flying along with him as the serpent would not harm them. In addition to this wonderful bit of symbolic carving, the columbarium has a beautiful bronze door showing lotus flowers, and there are porcelain pictures of Mr. and Mrs. Hajek on either side of the monument.

Individual family columbaria of the type found in BNC are very rare in Chicago, and, as is so often the case, each of them presents a different set of decoration and symbols to delight us.

Albert Walavich

2009 Dates

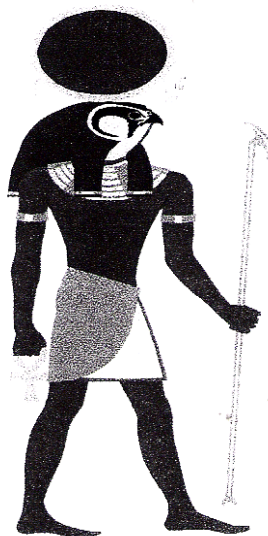
Sunday, January 25th, 1:00 meeting at
Klas Restaurant

Sunday, May 3rd, 1:00 tour

Summer meeting date TBA

Sunday, September 28th, 1:00 tour

Sunday, October 11th, 1:00 gala celebration
dinner



Welcome New Members

Andrew Hard

Chuck Michalek

Alan J. Sklenar

Deborah Tucker

Jim Tucker

Donor list

Heartfelt thanks to all of these generous donors who responded to the recent mailing. Your gifts will make a big difference to the restoration of the Columbarium.

Patron \$500-\$999

Robert Kubicka

Sponsor \$100-\$499

Janice Flynn & Ann Marie Wolosin, in memory of Jake & Anna Subert
 Juanita Lo Giudice & Anna Spirek
 Blanche Babcock
 Beatrice Cananban
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 Sherida Hudak & Edward Otto
 Carl & Mary Ellen Flaks
 Arlene Goletz
 Joseph & Lillian Hahn
 Mrs Dolores Hologa, in memory of Rezny & Sleshta families
 Mildred Homolska
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 Marge Sladek Stueckemann
 Brad Suster
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First Czechoslovak Garden Club of America
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 Rose Morrissey
 Thalia Puncochar
 Patt Salvino
 Evelyn Scott
 Lorraine Velek
 Jerome Wiczorek

Once again, thank you for making a real difference for BNC. Listed are donors as of November 30th. See our next issue for donations received in December and in 2009.

Winter event

Sunday, January 25, 2009

1:00 P.M.— 2:30 P.M., Czech dinner 2:30 P.M. movie

Cost \$25 (proceeds will go to restoration)

Program: Movie: Accidental Army: The Amazing True Story of the Czechoslovak Legion

Place: Klas Restaurant, 5734 W. Cermak Rd., Cicero, IL

Join us for a delicious meal and a chance to view this newly produced movie about the heroic Legionnaires. This is a follow up to our tour last May where we honored 30 Legionnaires at rest at BNC.

Advanced Reservations required (no later than January 18th)

Mail to: Juli Nelson, 300 Claymoor #2F, Hinsdale, IL 60521

Checks payable to Friends of BNC

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
Zip _____
Number attending @ \$25 each _____
Total Enclosed _____

The Eastland disaster

Many Chicagoans are familiar with the Eastland disaster of 1915. This is the story of a few of the lives lost in the tragedy.

On Saturday, July 24, 1915 before 7:30 a.m., employees of the General Electric Company, along with their families and friends, prepared to board the S. S. Eastland, docked along the Chicago River. The ship was one of several that were to take the group to Michigan City, Indiana for the company's fifth annual picnic. The previous year, the picnic was noted in the Chicago Tribune for the large number of attendees (ten thousand) and the racy swimwear worn by some of the female employees: "one piece bathing suits remarkable for their conservation of cloth."

The annual picnic of 1915 would also make newspaper headlines as one of the most tragic events in Chicago's history. With about 2,500 passengers on board, the Eastland capsized before it left the dock. More than 800 people died in the accident, including almost two dozen entire families. Several factors have been suggested to explain the tragedy: Poor ship design left the vessel top-heavy and unable to stabilize itself when needed, and the passenger load exceeded the ship's limit.

Many of the victims of the tragedy were Czechs who lived in Chicago and nearby Cicero, where the General Electric factory was located, and many have their final resting place in Section 16 of the Bohemian National Cemetery.

An interesting news tidbit from the Chicago Tribune was the story of Emma Meyer, age 21, a young woman who worked at a candy factory and was an attendee of the General Electric picnic and victim of the disaster. Meyer's body was mistaken for that of Mrs. Emma Schroll, age 23, and was buried at the Bohemian National Cemetery. Schroll's husband Julius and sisters Anna and Pauline Straka also died in the accident. The Tribune's article on August 19th explains the confusion of bodies. The last unidentified body from the Eastland disaster, number 571, looked very much like that of Emma Meyer, who was still missing after the accident. Friends, however, said that body 571 was not that of the missing woman.

A search through the personal effects of victims yielded the missing clue to the actual identity of the body. The effects of Mrs. Emma Schroll contained a piece of jewelry with the initials "EM" and the effects in the

envelope of body 571 did not match the description of Meyer's jewelry. Peter Hoffman, Cook County coroner at the time of the disaster, surmised that the woman buried in Emma Schroll's grave might be Emma Meyer, and ordered the body to be exhumed. Hoffman's suspicions were confirmed, and the real Mrs. Emma Schroll was buried in her grave and body 571, finally identified as Emma Meyer, was buried at Oakridge-Glen Oak Cemetery in Hillside, Illinois.

To further complicate the story of Emma Meyer and Emma Schroll, I must add an additional note about Margaret Morgan. Ted Wachholz's recent book, *The Eastland Disaster*, recounts the stories of these women and adds a little more information that the Tribune did not report. Apparently, before Emma Meyer and Emma Schroll got confused at the morgue, Emma Schroll had already been mistaken for a woman named Margaret Morgan. Schroll's body was taken to Miss Morgan's home and laid out for a wake, only for the real body of Margaret Morgan to be discovered at the morgue, thankfully before the wrong person was buried.

Susan Golland

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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E-mail: mdstueck@aol.com



Heritage Happenings

We're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



Time to renew your membership

All memberships, except those who renewed for 2 years last year, expire December 31st. Please send in your renewal with this form to remain in good standing! People joining the last quarter of 2008 will receive those 3 months as a bonus with their membership year beginning in January. Besides receiving our very interesting newsletter, your membership provides discounts on merchandise and tours, and the satisfaction of knowing you are helping us improve and beautify Bohemian National Cemetery! Friends of BNC is a 501c3 not-for-profit public charity. To make a tax-deductible donation to fund improvements at BNC, please write a separate check with a notation in the subject line. Thank you for your support!

Membership Fees

One Year:	\$25 Individual	\$20 Students/Seniors	\$35 Family	\$30 Senior family
Two years:	\$45 Individual	\$35 Students/Seniors	\$60 Family	\$50 Senior family

2009 Membership Application for Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Make checks payable to Friends of BNC and mail to Juli Nelson, Treasurer, 300 Claymore #2F, Hinsdale, IL 60521

Name (please print) _____ Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Email _____

(Note: we do not share emails but do use them to communicate about events related to BNC.)