

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue ~ Vol. 9 No. 1

July 2012

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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Phase One is Done !

On May 20th we celebrated the completion of the first phase of the Ceremony Hall Art Restoration Project. Friends of BNC raised more than \$20,000 to augment the \$9737.50 matching grant we received from the National Trust for Historic Preservation Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors. Tony Kartsonas, founder of Historic Surfaces LLC, began the work on this phase – a study to assess the condition of the decorative painting in the Hall and establish a protocol for its restoration and preservation – on November 1, 2011.



completed Phase One section ~ photograph by Kathy Mallin

Bohemian National Cemetery contracted Moravian-born painter John A. Mallin to decorate the Ceremony Hall in the newly constructed crematorium building in 1918. Mallin was hired several more times over the next 30 years to redo and refresh his original

work, giving him an unusual opportunity to reinterpret his own décor. Mallin last worked on the Ceremony Hall in 1947, and since then his work remained untouched, a true treasure because it was not altered or destroyed.

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What's New with Friends of BNC

Wow! That was my reaction as I walked into Ceremony Hall on Friday, May 18th, to see how it looked in preparation for our big party on May 20th. I'm afraid no photograph can capture the essence of how bright and glowing the Phase One area looks in comparison with the rest of the hall. We were delighted that about 120 people accepted our invitation to "Join Us Under

the Dome" that Sunday afternoon, including our Alderman, **Margaret Laurino**, and **Chuck Hagopian**, staff member for Judy Baar Topinka, Illinois State Comptroller and long-time BNC supporter. Now cleaned and restored, the golden portions of the area absolutely seem to shine as if they were lit from behind!

Many individuals and organizations are stepping up with generous donations to help us Restore the Past for the Future (see page four). Please consider joining them! Soon we will be announcing Phase Two of our Ceremony Hall Art Restoration Project.

On May 18th Friends board members and those

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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 cjsmetana@msn.com.

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Officers of Friends of BNC

President: Marge Sladek Stueckemann

Vice-President: Andy Bultas

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from the editor's laptop

I hope you all saw the profile the Chicago Tribune published on April 20th of our "Remarkable Woman," our president Marge Sladek Stueckemann. (There is a link to the article on our Friends website.) We're grateful to the anonymous person who nominated Marge for the series. As always, Marge proved to be a passionate spokesperson for our organization and our cause: as a direct result of the article, we received membership requests and donations.

William Hageman, the journalist who wrote the profile, asked Marge if there were any ghost stories associated with Bohemian National Cemetery, and she replied: "We're a funerary museum of art and history. We're not looked at as a creepy place. It's a garden. Come here and be inspired." And that is why so many of us have joined Friends of BNC: we are awed by the cemetery's art, we are intrigued by its history, we appreciate its serene beauty, and we are inspired every time we enter its gates.

There was so much to share with you this quarter, including news about our successful Under the Dome event and an update about our Restore the Past for the Future campaign, that there was no room for a "Stories of the Stones" article, but I hope to bring it back in the next issue. If you're disappointed the feature is missing, I have good news for you. You don't have to wait three months for another stone story. You can order today our new book, A Dear and Precious Heritage: Bohemian National Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois. In it you'll find a history of the cemetery's early years, information about the buildings and public monuments, interesting stories about people buried at BNC, and lots of color photos. It is a testament to our cemetery, which Marge described so well. I've spent a hectic past few months readying the book for publication, and it's wonderful to be able to write that we expect it to arrive from the printer the week of 16 July. You can find an order form on page five. I think you'll be inspired!

Na shledanou!
carol jean smetana

Welcome to Our New Members!

Violet Dvorak – Oakdale, MN

Jan Kocek – Palos Heights, IL

Peter Maher – Chicago, IL

Dawn Pelc – St. John, IN

Lillian Peska – Park Ridge, IL

Carol & Rich Sandowski – Glen Ellyn, IL

Gloria Skomasa – Park Ridge, IL

Janet A. Smart – Grayslake, IL

Mr. & Mrs. George Zahrobsky – Glen Ellyn, IL

Donna Zimmerman – Chicago, IL

What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)

from BNCA met **Czech Brigadier General Premysl Skacha** who was in town for the NATO Summit. He had come to preview locations for the Czech Minister of Defense, **Dr. Alexandr Vondra**, who arrived early on May 20th with his entourage for a tour and to place a wreath at the World Wars I and II Memorial. Friends provided our honored guests with gift bags, which included a copy of our crematorium/columbarium booklet, a map and guide brochure of the cemetery in Czech, a membership brochure and a *Mother Monument* magnet.

A number of Friends members were at the cemetery on May 25th to place the 1440 flags donated to us by **CIT Rail employees**. These wonderful people have only one member, **Amy Michalec**, with any historical tie to BNC. In 2011, the

CIT employees, wanting to help place flags somewhere for Memorial Day, read about our plans on our webpage and came to help. Seeing how tattered the flags were, they collected funds to buy us new ones for 2012. Two big boxes arrived at BNC in early May. About 15 CIT Rail employees, plus the entire Michalec family including their two children came to do the placement. What a gift and wonderful support of the broader Chicago community. Thanks, too, to the Friends members who also helped.

We had more Czech visitors on Memorial Day, four members of the **Czech Parliament's Committee for European Affairs** plus a staff member. After the ceremony they placed a wreath at the Civil War Veterans Monument and enjoyed a short tour of the cemetery.

Our two tours on June 2nd were also most memorable for 115 total attendees and a very well-received book table. Now we look forward to the **Czechoslovak American Congress picnic on Sunday, July 29th, at Kiwanis Park, 8820 Brookfield Avenue, Brookfield, from 11 am to 5 pm**. Please join us - we can always use help at our sales table (bring your folding chair) or just stop by to say hello!

Hope to see you all at our **August meeting** (see back page) to find out just what those tree monuments can tell us about our ancestors.

Have a wonderful summer, and if you are in Illinois, enjoy the most mosquito-free early summer I can ever remember!!

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President



photograph by Kathy Mallin

The Significance of Restoring the Past for the Future

After attending our *Under the Dome* open house on May 20th, **Jim Smick** of Attica, Indiana, wrote a letter of appreciation to Friends that captures the essence of our Ceremony Hall Art Restoration project.

The restoration work that has been accomplished really tantalizes one into visualizing the entire interior completed, including the ceiling murals that must have been in the entrance hall. What a fantastic legacy for Chicago and our Country! Every time I have been in the cemetery and, especially, the Columbarium, I have always had a sense of being suspended in time, very close in spirit to those to whom I am related but some only known to me through association, stories, and genealogy. It has always made me feel a part of something very great spiritually—and I treasure the many hours I have spent at Bohemian National in private meditation. I can see the interior work being done will not just enhance the already beautiful setting, but it will allow future generations the possibility to share in what we are all fortunate to have presently.



Donations

March 2012 through June 2012

Benefactors (\$1000 and above)

Violet Dvorak and Estate
of Blanche Dvorak
Rose Sebek Spachman
Slaninka

Patrons (\$500—\$999)

CSA Fraternal Life
Art and Kathryn Lorenz
Brad Suster and Hector
Hernandez

Sponsors (\$100—\$499)

Joseph and Dawn Calek
Regas Chefas
Carol May
Charles Michalek
Tom Panush *in memory of
Dorothy Becva Panush
and her 23 relatives
who are spending
eternity together at
BNC*

Paul and Angie Pirok
Beverly Rehm
Apostol and Sharon
Triffon
Albert Walavich
Roland Weis

Donors (\$25—\$99)

Kathy Babcock
Norman and Barbara
Hurd
Paul and Susan Kucera
McDonalds Corporation
Northbrook Firefighters
Local 1894 *in memory
of Josephine Simak*
Henrietta Bartizal Pons *in
honor of Carol Jean
Smetana*
Shirley Stegner *in memory
of Paul Fierla, Johanna
Tsolke Fierla, Adeline
Fierla Stiska and Paul
Fierla*

Thank You (\$1—\$24)

Jane Brown
Pat Salvino
Janet Smart

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

Restoring the Past for the Future Campaign

Your response to our Restoring the Past for the Future fundraising campaign for the Ceremony Hall Artwork Restoration project has been overwhelming. The support of all our members and friends has enabled us to complete Phase One and begin to lay the groundwork for the next stage.

We gratefully acknowledge for their remarkable generosity:

Dr. & Mrs. Joseph Ceithaml
CSA Fraternal Life
Violet Dvorak and Estate of
Blanche Dvorak
Robert Kubicka

Art & Kathryn Lorenz
Judy Lovaas
Paul and Angie Pirok
Henrietta Bartizal Pons
Rose Sebek Spachman Slaninka

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
Brad Suster and Hector Hernandez
Joseph and Linda Svehla

You are leading the way to making this restoration possible! Thank you!

Phase One is Done !

(Continued from page 1)

Kartsonas discovered that Mallin used high-quality materials such as pure 24-carat gold leaf to gild his decorations. The columns display Mallin's high level of expertise: they are fine examples of Marezzo scagliola, also called American scagliola because of its widespread use in the U.S. during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Scagliola, a labor-

intensive technique that makes stucco look like marble, requires extraordinary skill.

Our unique Ceremony Hall is not only valuable as a fine example of Mallin's ornamental art but also as a testament to the Bohemian community which founded and supported the cemetery. Mallin decorated the hall with symbols of fraternal and patriotic associations,

some of which no longer exist, whose support was integral to the success of the cemetery, providing a unique retrospective commemoration of those historical organizations.

The estimated cost of cleaning, restoring and preserving the entire Ceremony Hall is \$300,000. To date our Restoring the Past for the Future campaign has raised more than \$70,000 for this five-year project.

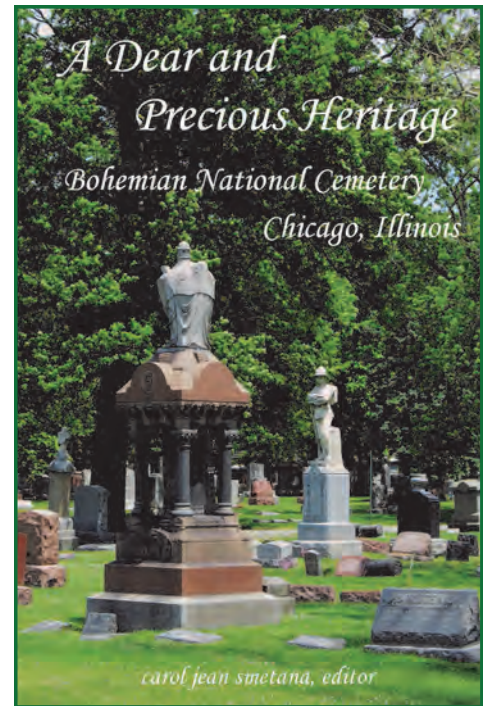
AVAILABLE NOW!

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery announces the publication of

*A Dear and Precious Heritage:
Bohemian National Cemetery
Chicago, Illinois*

This 192-page softcover book includes an in-depth look at the cemetery's early years; the history of its monuments and buildings; biographical sketches of Czech and Slovak community leaders; an exploration of some of the fascinating and unusual gravestones found at BNC; and accounts of historical events that impact the cemetery to this day. The book, profusely illustrated with color photographs, was designed and edited by our newsletter editor, carol jean smetana.

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery gratefully acknowledges a matching grant from the Department for Cultural Relations and Czechs Living Abroad of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic in support of the printing of *A Dear and Precious Heritage*.



Special price for members: \$25 plus \$5 shipping for each book.

Ship to: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip + 4 _____

___ Heritage books x \$25 = \$ ___ + shipping \$ ___ = \$ _____ Total check/credit card amount: \$ _____

Send order form and check or credit card information to:

**Juli Nelson
300 Claymoor #2F
Hinsdale, IL 60521-5076**

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

Card number _____

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Signature _____

**Upcoming
Events at
Bohemian
National
Cemetery**

**Sunday, August 19th, 1:30 pm ~ Friends Summer Meeting
“Trees That Talk: Conversing with Our Ancestors
Through Limestone Trees”
presented by Samantha Chmelik**

Ceremony Hall in the crematorium/columbarium.
Program is free and all are welcome. Refreshments will be available.

**Sunday, September 30th at 1:00 pm ~ Tour of the Tombstones
guided by Albert Walavich**

Two-hour walking tour begins at the gatehouse.
Cost: \$10 for Friends members, \$15 for non-members

Eastland Tragedy Brings Czech TV Correspondent to BNC

by Chuck Michalek

Friends of BNC President Marge Stueckemann and Friends member Chuck Michalek greeted Czech Television correspondent Michal Kubal to Bohemian National Cemetery on April 13th. Mr. Kubal, along with his cameraman, had first visited the site at the Chicago River where the *Eastland* capsized in 1915, resulting in 844 deaths. In his coverage of the *Eastland*, Mr. Kubal also filmed in the sections at BNC where 143 Eastland victims are buried.

At the time of correspondent Kubal's filming, the world was commemorating the centennial anniversary of the April 15, 1912, sinking of the *Titanic*. Previous Czech news coverage had depicted the *Eastland* tragedy as the "Czech Titanic" or "Titanik II" due to the large number of Czechs and Slovaks involved in the disaster. Included in the current filming was an interview with Christine Harmon standing next to the Sindelar family monument in Section 16. Ms. Harmon is a descendant of the Sindelar family, which tragically suffered the drowning of Mr. and Mrs. Sindelar and their five children.

If you are interested in viewing the Czech TV coverage, it may still be available at:

1) <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/1097181328-udalosti/212411000100415/obsah/198923-od-potopeni-titaniku-uplynulo-100-let/>. Watch the news intro and the *Eastland* piece will quickly appear.

2) www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10117034229-168hodin/. Click Videoarchiv, next click 15-4-2012, then click Titanik II.

A planning committee is currently meeting to develop a monument dedicated to the *Eastland* at BNC. If you are interested in learning about or assisting with the Eastland Centennial Commemorative Project, please contact Chuck Michalek, michalekchas@aol.com.

Děkuji Vám!

Grateful thanks to **Henrietta Bartizal Pons** for her great support and excellent work as our Membership Chair for so many years. Welcome to **Gerri Romanelli**, our new Membership Chair, and to **Jerry Gaydusek** who will be Special Projects Chair.

Under the Dome:

Andy Bultas, host
Helen and Jerry Gaydusek, hosts, plus generous donors of refreshments
Barbara Hoffman, hostess
Art & Kathryn Lorenz, hosts, refreshments
Juli Nelson, check-in
Lili Nemec, hostess, refreshments
Gerri Romanelli, hostess
Helene Schaeffer and Helen Souta, refreshments
Glen Spachman, host

Donation of 1440 American flags for Memorial

Day decoration:
CIT Rail employees, organized by **Sheila Kowalski**

Placement of flags for Memorial Day ~

CIT Rail volunteers:
Rachel Anderson
Nory Drammoh
Laura Felix
Andrew Felix
Marlo & Claire Gracek
Jeff Haden
Kimberly Helin
Sheila Kowalski
Mel Kusta
Amy, John, Wendy & Daniel Michalec
John O'Toole
Fred & Ellen Ranck

Friends volunteers:

Al and Mary Avery
Ray Brabec

John Jacobs

Art & Kathryn Lorenz
Henrietta Bartizal Pons
Marge Sladek Stueckemann

Memorial Day:

Martha and Chuck Cervenka, who bought, set up and served refreshments for Memorial Day, as well as buying the flowers.
Art and Kathryn Lorenz
Mary Syrup, refreshments

June 2nd Walking Tours:

Gloria Adamek, book table
Art Lorenz, book table



Live from BNC

The work on the north gatehouse is completed. The walls and ceilings have been painted. A new ceiling in the men's washroom has been installed. Both washroom ceilings have been painted. Many people who attended the Mothers Day program Sunday May 13th and were enjoying the refreshments provided, commented on how beautiful the gatehouse looked.

The installation of the granite panels on the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum has been completed by **Cornel Dobrovsky**. The mausoleum looks very good.

The cemetery has been fortunate this year to have two young volunteers, **Steve Ziolkowski** and **Dave Pimm, Jr.**, join the old-time volunteers in helping to make the cemetery better.

Over the past couple of months, Dave, Cornel, **Duro**, and **John Ilse** have done a lot of work repairing the old sewer lines from the bungalows and the crematorium/columbarium, flushing them out and installing some new sections where needed.

The storm that occurred in the first week of May created some leaks in the roof of the crematorium/columbarium building, causing some plaster to flake and in some places fall from the Ceremony Hall dome. In order to assess the problem, a lift capable of rising 120 feet will have to be brought to the cemetery so workers can get a close look at the tiled roof of the dome.

The storm also blew a lot of debris into the lagoon, blocking the drainage line to the river. John Ilse

and Dave Pimm, Jr., removed debris and a log from the drain pipe, and the lagoon began to flow freely again. John built a fence around the drainage area to prevent this from occurring again.

Steve Ziolkowski started volunteer work at Bohemian National Cemetery on May 1, 2012. He comes by train from Bolingbrook, Illinois. His first volunteer job was power-washing the white wall on Pulaski Road. Steve has worked five to six days a week since May 1st, including working long hours on the Friday and Saturday before Memorial Day installing the fuel pump on the cemetery's dump truck. He has also laid sod and leveled and placed monuments.

John Ilse, with Steve's help, was able to get the shut off valve in the pit across from the pump house to work. They also worked together on the water tower.

Enough about the work that has been done around the cemetery. There have been many people who have come to visit our beautiful cemetery and have found it very historical and interesting.

The morning of May 20th the Czech **Minister of Defense Alexandr Vondra** and Czech **General Premysl Skacha**, in Chicago for the NATO conference, were given a tour of Bohemian National Cemetery.

The afternoon of May 20th Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery held its "Under the Dome" fundraiser event in the Ceremony Hall, unveiling the completed

restoration work to the public. **Tony Kartsonas** spoke and related what was done to restore the 20-foot-wide area. Over 100 people attended the event.

The cemetery's Memorial Day program, assembled by **BNCA Vice-President Bill Hudecek**, was outstanding this year. The English speaker was **Wayne Wolf**, the Czech speakers were **Angie Bultas**, **Jan Bauer**, Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs, **Jan Kubata**, Member of the Committee on European Affairs, and **Dana Hunatová**, Consul General of the Czech Republic. Also attending the ceremony were the rest of the delegation of the Committee for European Affairs: **František Novosad**, Vice-Chairman of the Committee for European Affairs, **Josef Šenfeld**, committee member, and **Lenka Mozgová**, clerk of the committee. The Czech delegation participated in all the Memorial Day activities, enjoying refreshments in the gatehouse with everyone and marching to the crematorium/columbarium for the service in the Ceremony Hall. They then laid a wreath at the Civil War Veterans Monument. The **Odd Fellows** held their services at their monument after the services in the Ceremony Hall.

Many people from around our country and from Europe visit Bohemian National Cemetery. They find our cemetery grounds, our monuments and our buildings interesting. I encourage everyone to come and visit and see for themselves our beautiful cemetery.

Andy Bultas
Vice-President

*Friends of Bohemian
National Cemetery*

611 Harvard Lane
Libertyville, IL 60048

Phone: 847-362-9036
Email: mdstueck@aol.com



we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



**“Trees That Talk ~
Conversing With Our Ancestors Through
Limestone Trees”**

Sunday, August 19, 2012, at 1:30 pm.

Join us in the Ceremony Hall in the crematorium/columbarium building at Bohemian National Cemetery for Friends' annual summer program.

Samantha Chmelik, Master's Candidate in Public History at Loyola University Chicago, will discuss how we can interpret the symbols our ancestors used in their limestone tree grave markers.

We will also elect our officers and directors. Current officeholders are willing to serve another term: President - Marge Sladek Stueckemann; Vice-President - Andrew Bultas; Secretary - Helen Gaydusek; Treasurer - Juli Nelson; Directors - Martha Cervenka, Chuck Cervenka, Evelyn Krenek Fergle. Nominations may also be made from the floor.

The meeting is free, the meeting place breezy, and cold water and other refreshments will be available. For more information, check our website www.friendsofbnc.org, or call 847-362-9036.

