

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Winter Issue ~ Vol. 9 No. 3

January 2013

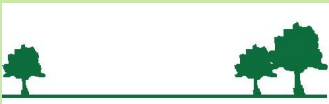
carol jean smetana, editor

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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What's New with Friends of BNC

It was 1933 when Mayor Anton Cermak was assassinated - hard to believe it was 80 years already! Don't miss our Winter meeting at Klas Restaurant on January 27th, when Friends will be featuring Mr. **Karl Sup**, President of the Eastland Memorial Society, to help us know more about this most famous resident of Bohemian National Cemetery. See page 5 and the back of this

newsletter for all the details, and be sure to join us. You may come just for the program at no charge, but hopefully you'll be there for the delicious food and fun of the Czech dinner beforehand.

We are delighted to

announce that the **Moja Vlast dancers** from Milwaukee will be our entertainment for the **Springfest Gala on Sunday, May 5th!** These energetic people will perform authentic folk dances from Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, dressed in the appropriate native dress. They will also narrate some stories of just how spring was celebrated in the "old country."

(cont'd on page 3)



Could this be the site of a new monument at BNC? See page 4.

Live from BNC

A new roof has been installed on the potting shed, the building where the equipment used to maintain the cemetery grounds is stored. The old roof had holes in it and was starting to cave in. **John Illse** re-enforced the beams so that a new roof could be installed.

When the motor burned out for the exhaust duct for the cremation oven area, it was decided to install an exhaust fan that would clear out the whole room when the oven door is opened. **Chuck Cervenka** purchased the fan. John Illse removed some glass

blocks from the window in the room and then installed the fan and secured the opening. Chuck and John installed the electric service to the fan and a timer for the fan. **Chuck Michalek** and John Illse sealed the area on the garage roof that

(continued on page 7)

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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from the editor's laptop

One of the aspects of Bohemian National Cemetery that I particularly appreciate is all the history that is represented at the cemetery. When I'm at the cemetery, I can't help but think about what life was like and how it has changed during the 135 years (and still counting) of the cemetery's existence. There are reminders of almost every aspect of life at the cemetery.

The Mallin emblems inside the Ceremony Hall represent many of the fraternal and patriotic organizations so vital to the community. Spiritual life is expressed through religious symbols, and those symbols' existence at BNC reveal the tolerance and open-mindedness of the Freethinkers who founded the cemetery. The war monuments are a meaningful place to pause and remember those who fought and died for our country. Occupation stones depict tools of the trades. Epitaphs inscribed on gravestones add texture to the names and dates.

Wandering the grounds you can find tombstones of famous men and women, or niche plaques bearing their names — Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak; Alice Masarykova, daughter of the President-Liberator of Czechoslovakia Tomas G. Masaryk; Milan Hodza, Slovak politician and Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia; August Geringer, Bohemian-American publisher. Section 16 is a special place for many of us who like to wander the cemetery. The ominous date of death of July 24, 1915, brings a special poignancy to a tombstone with a young child's name, the names of a husband and wife, or the names of several family members: that date tells us they were victims of the Eastland. I have been fascinated by the story of the Eastland — in the Czech Republic it's called the "Czech Titanic" — and am grateful that Chuck Michalek is spearheading the Eastland Centennial Commemorative Project to establish a monument at Bohemian National Cemetery to commemorate the tragedy. Be sure to read his article about the project on page 4, and don't miss the opportunity to hear more about the Eastland and how Anton Cermak reached out to the Bohemian-American community in their time of need.

Na shledanou!
carol jean smetana

And don't forget: You can find the latest issue of Heritage Happenings in color on our website at www.friendsofbnc.org/currentnewsletters.htm.

Děkuji Vám!

To all our members and friends
for their ongoing support of
Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery;
To the staff of the cemetery
for their hard work throughout the year;
To the BNCA delegates
for their continued commitment
to cemetery operations.

Welcome to Our New Members!

Michael E. Condon ... Chicago, IL
Christine Kuczora ... La Grange Park, IL
Daniel Sandrin & Mary Rasmussen ... Chicago, IL
Lois Sterba ... Downers Grove, IL
Albert Tuhy ... Mundelein, IL

What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)

Watch for your invitation that will be arriving sometime in February.

Along with director **Evelyn Fergle**, I was privileged to be the guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic in September. We were invited to Prague for a week, along with those like us who promote Czech culture in some foreign land. We met people from England, Belgium, Canada, Israel, other parts of the U.S., and even a group from Brazil! The Czech government considers people who have remembered and promoted their heritage as branches of the main tree of citizens, and is totally supportive of our efforts to make this very small country and its treasures known to our local areas. From fantastic

performances of folk dance by some of the best groups in the country to an evening at the National Theater (with English subtitles, thank goodness), to outstanding music, discussions of issues of the expatriate organizations, to just being part of meeting people around the world - it was an unbelievable week which I will never forget.

Perhaps you aren't aware how many people from Chicago with no family ties to the cemetery find it so fascinating that they come for tours. This year we have hosted groups from Milwaukee (50 strong), buses from Lake County chartered by the Chicago Art Institute, two neighborhood tours of 20–30 people each, and a

daytime Chicago History Museum tour, plus two after-dark flashlight tours. We also have hosted some family groups (cost is \$125 for a private tour with **Al Walavich**) and are happy to set up a special tour for your family if the usual dates we offer aren't working for you. Of course that does not include the many groups that come from the Czech Republic— at least four groups this year alone!

All the best for a most happy and healthy 2013! We have celebrated a wonderful year for Friends in 2012 and are eager to see just what we can accomplish for our mission in the new year.

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

**Saturday, June 8th at 10:00 am & 1:00 pm ~
Tours of the Tombstones
guided by Albert Walavich**

July ~ BNC picnic, date to be announced

**Sunday, August 18th at 1:30 pm ~
Friends Summer Meeting featuring a
program about famous cornet player
Bohumir Kryl and historic music machines**

**Sunday, September 29th ~
Tours of the Tombstone
guided by Albert Walavich**



Introducing ... The Eastland Centennial Commemorative Project

by Chuck Michalek

Many Friends of BNC members may recall hearing or reading stories about the 1915 capsizing of the *Eastland* steamship in the Chicago River, claiming 844 lives. Despite the large number of victims, this disaster has been referred to as “America’s forgotten tragedy.” The Czech and Slovak communities, in particular, were devastated by this tragedy. The centennial cemetery commemorative book published in 1977 by the Bohemian National Cemetery Association states, “Many of the victims were Bohemian people, and a large number of these are buried at Bohemian National Cemetery, so many, in fact, that almost the entire section of 16 was sold for their burials.”

To memorialize this tragedy, the 1915 BNCA board and its delegates – shortly after the disaster occurred – approved a proposal “to erect a monument or suitable memorial decoration” in memory of the victims of the *Eastland*. The BNCA’s centennial book further states that, for whatever reason, “no record was found that this was done.”

2013: Almost a century later ...

As the 100-year anniversary of the *Eastland* disaster approaches in 2015, several interested individuals and groups have indicated a desire to fulfill the monument proposal voted on by BNCA members nearly 100 years ago.

This past year, a planning committee has met to form the Eastland Centennial Commemorative Project. The



committee is comprised of members from Friends of BNC, the Eastland Disaster Historical Society, a Chicago marine heritage group, and the Superintendent of BNC. A mission statement, set of goals and design theme were drafted and approved by this planning committee to fulfill BNCA’s historic intention to erect a suitable Eastland monument within the premises of BNC. BNCA’s Board and Delegate Assembly have made available a significant site for the proposed Eastland monument. (Yes, that’s a photo of the site on the first page of this issue.)

Over the next year, action steps will be taken to bring to BNC an Eastland monument that will respectfully honor the victims and heroes of the *Eastland* and help commemorate the *Eastland* disaster’s centennial anniversary.

The monument’s design will incorporate respectful, educational, spiritual and maritime themes.

What you can do to help...

Let us know if you are interested in any of the following areas:

-Planning. We seek to incorporate feedback from individuals, families and organizations interested in the *Eastland*. In particular, we would be interested in hearing from individuals who may have friends or descendants involved with the *Eastland* disaster.

- **Publicity.**
- **Fundraising.**

For more information, please contact Chuck Michalek, Friends of BNC member and delegate to BNCA, at michalekchas@aol.com.



Join us on Sunday, May 5th, 2013, at Porretta's Elegant Banquets, 3718 N. Central Avenue, Chicago (just north of Berwyn and Cicero), for Springfest, our spring gala and fundraiser. We'll begin at noon with a reception, which will include hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. Dinner will be at 1:00 pm with wine and a choice of entrée. Cost will be \$75. Enjoy the energetic music and folk dance of the Moja Vlast Czech-Slovak Dancers of Milwaukee (Moja Vlast Folklorny Subor), who perform dances from Bohemia, Slovakia and Moravia, dressed in authentic kroje from the different regions. We'll have favors, fresh flowers on the tables, and our popular silent auction, which will include the BNC centennial book, historic Sokol postcards, beautiful china, and other treasures. Purchase an ad in our Springfest booklet to honor your ancestors, remember your family, or even advertise your business. Want to get involved? We need help in promoting Springfest and in finding or soliciting items for our silent auction. To volunteer, call Marge at 847-362-9036 or email her at mdstueck@aol.com.

More details will be arriving in your mailbox and on our website next month!

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery Winter Meeting

This year our annual winter meeting at Klas Restaurant on Sunday, January 27th will feature a presentation by Karl Sup, co-founder and president of the Eastland Memorial Society (www.eastlandmemorial.org). Most of our readers are familiar with the events of July 24, 1915: Western Electric had hired the passenger ship *Eastland* to ferry its employees across Lake Michigan to the annual company picnic in Michigan City, Indiana. Some 2500 men, women and children had boarded the ship when, still moored to the wharf, it rolled onto its side. Eight hundred forty-four passengers drowned. Karl's interest in the *Eastland* disaster is personal. His grandparents Herman Krause and Elsa Neumann and a great-aunt were all *Eastland* survivors. His grandmother told Sup that a rescuer grabbed hold of her long, flowing hair to pull her from the river. As a boy, Sup became fascinated by the story of the *Eastland*, leading him to find out all he could about the ship and the disaster. One aspect that Sup researched and will be sharing with us is the story of Anton Cermak and his involvement in the aftermath of the *Eastland* disaster.

Cermak's relationship with the Bohemian National Cemetery dates back at least to 1911 when, according to the centennial history of the Bohemian National Cemetery Association, Alderman Anton J. Cermak advised the cemetery association to protest the city's plans to build a tuberculosis sanitarium on land just north of the cemetery. (Despite the protest, the city went ahead with its plans.) Four years later, Cermak's name appears again in the history in paragraphs about the *Eastland* disaster:

"Special thanks were extended by the Association to Chief Bailiff Anton J. Cermak and to the Bohemian Relief Committee, for making available automobiles to transport survivors of the victims [of the *Eastland*] and for transportation of floral pieces to the cemetery.

"Despite the exceedingly large number of funerals held within several days [143 victims of the *Eastland* were buried at Bohemian National Cemetery, more than at any other cemetery], and the large number of people attending these, there was no confusion and no damage to cemetery property, thanks to the splendid organization of the entire schedule of burials by Mr. Cermak and his assistants, and the cemetery officials and workers."

Reservations must be made for the meal portion of our meeting - use the form on the back of this issue. You are welcome to come just for the presentation if you prefer, but then you would miss out on the delicious Bohemian meal and the opportunity for fellowship with fellow Friends.

For more information, call 847-362-9036. See you at Klas's on the 27th!

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

Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

was leaking. This was above the area that we had re-enforced with an iron beam after jacking up the area. After this Chuck Michalek and **Jerry Gaydusek** started working on the garage roof. Chuck Michalek bought all the materials needed to repair the roof. Chuck and Jerry have been laying roofing tar paper and tarring the areas. Jerry said the chimney and the sidewalls are in dire need of tuck pointing. Chuck Michalek and Jerry Gaydusek after a couple of months have finished sealing the garage roof. However there still is a little more work to do on the roof, which will be done when weather permits.

Chuck Cervenka, Chuck Michalek, Jerry Gaydusek, **Andy Bultas**, John Illse and **Dave Pimm, Jr.**, have been working on the crematorium/columbarium sewer line. The sewer line and the water drain lines run down the road by the lagoon. After digging up sections of the road, broken sewer pipes were found, as well as broken drain water lines. After studying the flowage of the drain water lines, it was discovered that the sewers with the drain water rose and receded with the level of the lagoon. So even though the drain water lines were broken, the water was receding into the lagoon. That is why, before the new drain system that John Illse and others installed at the east end of

the lagoon, the lagoon was overflowing its banks and flooding up to the door of the crematorium. John Illse has checked on the broken sewer line and found out where a new sewer pipe has to be connected so that the sewage flows into the City of Chicago sewage system.

Duro of Mulroy Demolition and Excavating, Inc., has lent his digging equipment to the cemetery. Dave Pimm, Jr., has been using this equipment to dig up the asphalt road by the lagoon, so a new sewage line can be installed. After digging up over 200 feet of the lagoon road, Dave and John installed 200 feet of 8-inch drain pipe. They also made connections so that the cemetery storm drain water flows into the lagoon. In addition they installed two rod outs for the new lines. The installation of the new sewer line from the crematorium/columbarium is now complete, and the sewage now flows into the City of Chicago sewer system under Pulaski Road as it should. The road that was dug up for the sewer line has been filled in with crushed stone. The clay dirt that was originally dug up has been moved to the dump area.

This year has been productive for the reason that all the sewer lines have been repaired and now flow into the City of Chicago sewer system. This also includes the new sewer lines that were installed from the bungalows. It can only be

surmised as to how many years the sewage was being absorbed by the ground like a septic system. A lot of people worked on this project, but the majority of the work was done by John Illse and Dave Pimm, Jr. The cemetery owes these two individuals many thanks for work well done. Because of this project the cemetery now has the knowledge as to where all the sewage lines are and where they flow. The cemetery also has accumulated some information on the storm sewer lines that flow throughout the cemetery.

This year has been a very trying time for Bohemian National Cemetery. There have been many problems. The Illinois Cemetery Act in its original form would have threatened ongoing cemetery operations; however, after many negotiations, it was amended to be workable. The many problems with buildings and sewer and drain lines and vandalism to statues have had to be dealt with. The problem with the dome on the crematorium/columbarium building still needs to be resolved. But after all these problems the cemetery is still viable. A lot of this is because of the cemetery personnel, the board and the volunteers. The cemetery is still a beautiful place and should be visited to be fully appreciated.

Andy Bultas
Vice-President

Ceremony Hall Art Restoration/Dome Repair Update

Our progress restoring the beautiful Mallin artwork in Ceremony Hall has been temporarily halted due to the need for repairs to the dome. The cemetery will be looking into methods for repair in March, once the threat of snow and ice is passed. Thank you to all who designated their donations for this important step that has to be taken before we can continue with the painting restoration.

*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



**Join Friends at our Winter Meeting to hear about
*Anton Cermak and the
Eastland Disaster*
Presentation by Karl Sup,
President of the Eastland
Memorial Society**

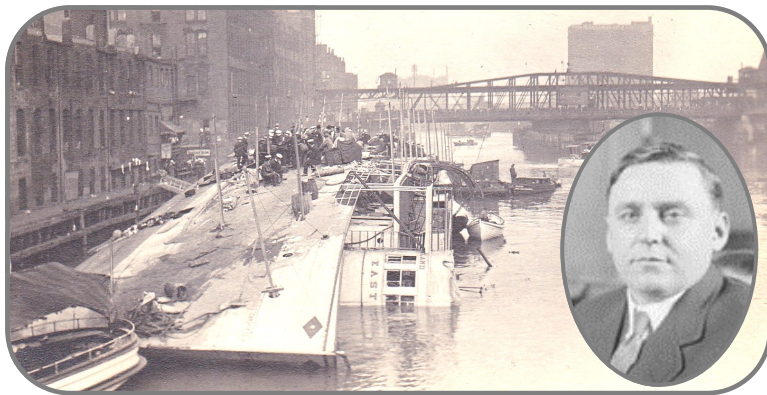
Where: Klas Restaurant, 5734 W. Cermak Rd, Cicero

When: Sunday, January 27, 2013

12:30 pm ~ Cash Bar

1:30 pm ~ Czech Dinner, \$25 includes tax & tip

3:00 pm ~ Free Program



Reservations for the Czech dinner are required and must be postmarked by January 22, 2013.

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

NAME: _____

Name on Card _____

ADDRESS: _____

Card Number _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP+4 _____

Expiration Month _____ Year _____ Security code _____

Number Attending @ \$25 each: _____

Signature _____

Total Enclosed: _____

Send with check or credit card information by January 22 to: Juli Nelson, 300 Claymoor #2F, Hinsdale, IL 60521