

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Spring Issue ~ Vol. 9 No. 4

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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

SpringFest - just the name alone is exciting if you are in the Chicago area with highs at least 10 degrees below normal and quite a bit of snow still on the ground! Hopefully you have your invitation and are making plans to join us. Porretta's is a beautiful place, just south of BNC and north of Berwyn and Cicero. Have a wonderful time and help make the entryway of the

columbarium look as lovely as it did when artist John Mallin finished his decorating so long ago!

Designing with flowers? That was done regularly at BNC in the years when the cemetery had its own greenhouses. Now the cemetery board has created a contest for the delegate organizations, including Friends, to design, plant, and weed a special

area. If you have an interest in gardening and would like to help do this, PLEASE let us know! We would be planting probably the end of May, with flowers provided by **Gethsemane Garden Center**, which has a close relationship with the cemetery. We'll need help weeding after that! The cemetery will water the design. Visitors to the cemetery in June and early

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June
8th

10 am
&
2 pm

In two months grass will be green, trees will have leaves ... and Albert Walavich will be leading two Tours of the Tombstones. Join him and learn something new about our 136-year-old cemetery!

Live from BNC

Cemetery employees **Ed, Sam and John**, along with volunteers **Chuck Cervenka, Jerry Gaydusek, Frank Saballus, Chuck Michalek and Dave Pimm, Jr.**, have been trimming trees and removing diseased trees throughout the cemetery. The branch pile has been

growing, and as soon as the weather warms up, the cemetery employees will start chipping the pile.

Dirt from the dirt pile will be used to fill in low areas around the cemetery and to build up the lagoon shoreline, so **Gethsemane Gardens** can plant trees to improve the lagoon area.

Jerry Gaydusek has been cleaning and painting the walls in the basement in the administration building. Chuck Michalek and **Andy Bultas** have been helping Jerry remove old cans of chemicals. Chuck has been taking about three boxes of the old spray chemicals each

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Heritage Happenings

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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

I read an article online recently about an Indiana woman suing her church over a grave marker. After her husband died in 2009, the woman spent \$9,600 having a tombstone made that reflected his passions for sports and the outdoors - only to be told by the church that owned the cemetery that the tombstone would not be allowed. The church said the custom-made, black granite headstone - in the shape of a miniature couch and featuring logos of NASCAR and the Indianapolis Colts and illustrations of a deer and a dog - "was not acceptable as it was of a secular nature."

I haven't seen a NASCAR or Indianapolis Colts logo at BNC - but I've seen a Cubs logo. I haven't seen a deer on a tombstone at BNC - but I've seen a dog. Indeed, grave markers "of a secular nature" abound at Bohemian National Cemetery, which is not surprising since the cemetery was founded by Freethinkers as a place where "any Bohemian could be buried without regard to religion." Take a glance at the photos in our book A Dear and Precious Heritage and you will see monuments personalized with depictions of mountains, musical notes, occupational and fraternal symbols, and, yes, a black granite headstone featuring cars. The monument that is the subject of the Indiana lawsuit would be right at home on the grounds of our cemetery.

Despite being a secular cemetery whose founding grew out of discord between the Bohemian people in Chicago and the Catholic church, burials at BNC have from the beginning been open to all, without regard to religion, race, or nationality. And so, as you wander the cemetery, you will see the unquestionably secular "Beyond the Vines" columbarium for diehard Cubs fans. You will see funerary art depicting causes of death. You will see treestones and mausoleums. And you will also see overt religious symbolism -- the Muslim star and crescent, the Jewish Star of David, the Christian cross and crucifix, angels, and saints. Join Albert Walavich for one of his marvelous Tours of the Tombstones and you might hear him say that you will never see as many religious symbols in any other non-religious cemetery. It's one of the things I love most about the cemetery: the rich variety of monuments embracing the full range of human life and death.

Na shledanou!
carol jean smetana

Děkuji Vám!

Art & Kathryn Lorenz for providing logistical help
for our January meeting

Alberta Adamson for filling in for Karl Sup
as our January speaker

Klara Moldova for helping greet and register
at the January meeting

Pat Satek for our lovely SpringFest logo

Welcome to Our New Members!

Mary Deal ... Akron, OH

Barb and Candy Gabriel ... Chicago, IL

Marjorie Prochazka ... Berwyn, IL

Carlotta Rotman ... Lake Bluff, IL

Gerald and Carol Vovis ... Cheshire, CT



What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)

July will be able to vote for their favorite design. The winning group (CSA lodges, Sokols, Friends of BNC, etc.) will receive a cash prize at the picnic on July 7th.

Anton Cermak is surely BNC's most famous "resident," and this spring is the 80th anniversary of his assassination. Sixty-five people came to our January 27th meeting, where **Alberta Adamson** did a great job substituting for Mr. Sup who couldn't be with us. We observed slides of unusual scenes

of the *Eastland* Disaster and heard more details about the captain and his lack of any compassion (or any final punishment), plus great details on how Cermak helped, especially his fellow Czechs. Thanks to the Czechoslovak Heritage Museum and its president, **Cary Mentzer**, who brought some of the museum artifacts, including copies of historic pictures of Cermak, newspaper articles about his life, and two books that provided more enrichment for the topic! In fact, the *Chicago Tribune* just had a great piece by John Kass on Cermak,

with a picture and all, so it isn't just our group who is remembering him!

Please check the calendar for ALL the things that are happening this spring and join us at any or all of them.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at SpringFest!

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer hours begin May 1st!

Office will be open during the week from 7:30 am to 3 pm and on Saturdays from 9 am to 1 pm. Grounds open until 4 pm.

Saturday, May 11th ~ CSA "Join Hands Day"

Join CSA members between 9 and 10 am to help with spring cleaning at the cemetery
Call 847-362-9036 for more information

Sunday, May 12th at 1:00 pm ~ Mother's Day Program

Meet at the Mother Monument in front of the crematorium/columbarium
Refreshments afterward in the gatehouse

Saturday, May 18th ~ TG Masaryk Czech School children's picnic

Friday, May 24th at 10:00 am ~ Decorate for Memorial Day

Help place flags for Memorial Day ~ meet in the office

Monday, May 27th at 9:00 am ~ Memorial Day service

Refreshments in gatehouse to begin

Saturday, June 8th at 10:00 am & 1:00 pm ~

Tours of the Tombstones guided by **Albert Walavich**

Meet in the Gatehouse for a 2-hour walking tour
\$10 Friends members ~ \$15 non-members

Sunday, July 7th, noon to 4:00 pm ~ BNC picnic

Czech food, music and fun ~ Friends of BNC books/gifts available

Sunday, August 18th ~ Friends of BNC Summer Meeting

Program on Bohumir Kryl ~ details next issue



Stories of the Stones

by carol jean smetana



One summer afternoon a friend and I were wandering among the grave markers east of the gatehouse when we saw this interesting tombstone. At the time, I was working on a presentation about the Czech language for genealogists, and what first caught my eye were the two different spellings of the deceased's name – a wonderful example of declension of names in the Czech language.

But the next thing I noticed was the unusual inscription:

Czech women with the Pavla Čechová Lodge J.C.D. No. 113, Wilber, Nebraska (dedicate this) to their namesake and distinguished Czech-American writer Pavla Čechová.

Who was this woman that a group in Nebraska named their lodge after her and joined with other Czech women to fund a monument on her grave?

Pavla Čechová was the pen name for Vlasta Charlotte Kozel, which I learned from the two brief mentions she receives in two classic reference books about Czech-Americans. In his 1920 book *The Čechs (Bohemians) in America*, Thomas Čapek notes that, despite being born and raised in Chicago, Vlasta “acquired a remarkable command” of the Czech language. Praising her for choosing to write in Czech, he

observes that Čechová's contributions to newspapers were “colorful articles of striking originality.” Jan Habenicht, however, in his book *History of Czechs in America*, while acknowledging that her articles were “informative,” criticizes them for being mostly translations – “often very poor” – of articles in *The Ladies Home Journal*. He continues: “The articles dealt with women's emancipation and education of the young. Other articles encouraged girls and women to take part in education and national activities. These matters also were not original, but translations.”

I can't help but wonder if Habenicht was perhaps a bit harsh in his assessment of Čechová, because he notes that she wrote for *Svornost*, the newspaper of the Freethinkers – and Habenicht shows a definite anti-Freethinker bias throughout his book.

The top of Čechová's tombstone gives her life span: 12-4-1873—28-10-1901. Notice the order: day first, followed by month and then year. This is a typical Czech formulation for dates. An extract of the death certificate for Vlasta Kozel confirms the death date of October 28, 1901, and reveals that she was single and died from tuberculosis, which she had had for ten years.

The Bohemian National Cemetery anniversary books note the installation of this monument in 1908, seven years after Čechová's death. The BNC Association scheduled its annual inspection tour of the cemetery to coincide with the unveiling of the tombstone so they could participate in the commemoration.

Jednota Českých Dám (J.C.D.) – Union of Bohemian Women – was a women's charitable and patriotic organization affiliated with Č.S.P.S., the forerunner of the organization known today as CSA Fraternal Life. J.C.D.'s slogan was “Enlightenment gave birth to woman's freedom.” In 1977 J.C.D. merged with CSA.

And what about the two different spellings of the name? “Pavle Čechové” is the dative form of the name Pavla Čechová. The “dedicated to” context requires the dative form in the Czech language.

Decoration Day Celebration at Český Národní Hřbitov One Hundred Years Ago

Editor's note: The following are excerpts from the article "Decoration Day Celebrations Cesky Narodni Hrbítov," published in the Denní Hlasatel on May 31, 1913. The full article can be accessed at http://flps.newberry.org/article/5418478_7_0211.

Although the weather in the early morning hours was not reassuring and at times the sky was covered with definitely threatening clouds, life on the streets of Bohemian districts in Chicago yesterday showed extraordinary activity. Throngs of people, eager to get on to their destinations, boarded the streetcars bound for our cemeteries. The line going to the Český Národní Hřbitov (Bohemian National Cemetery) was particularly crowded....

The parade ... started at West 18th and May Streets. Brousek's Military Band led the group which marched through the streets of our Pilsen District to Robey Street, where cars were waiting to take the marchers to the Ceska Utulna A Sirotcinec (Bohemian Old People's Home and Orphanage)....

At the Utulna the parade reassembled ... While Brousek's Band played funereal marches, the parade resumed its march to the Cemetery ... headed by Mayor Carter Harrison.

... After the wreaths and other floral offerings had been placed at the [Civil War Veterans] monument, a three-shot salvo was fired to the honor of fallen Bohemian soldiers. ... [Mayor Harrison] started his speech by saying that as mayor of the City of Chicago, he considered it a great honor to spend such a beautiful afternoon among the Bohemians ... because he knew that among them there were many who did not hesitate a single moment when their new homeland was in danger and sacrificed even their lives for freedom, humanity, and right....

After the applause following this speech had died down, an inmate of the Sirotcinec (Orphanage), little Viktora Kaspar, recited Mach's poem, "Padlemu Vojinu" (To the Soldier Who Fell), and Brousek's Band played Tobian's march, "Hearts and Flowers".

[T]he Bohemian speaker of the day, the well-known

author and world traveler, Mr. E. St. Vraz ... delivered the following speech:

"... The American nation commemorates today those who did not hesitate to make the supreme sacrifice in the Civil War; who gave their lives for their country, for the common good ... Today it celebrates its

unification, its progress, its power. It gives thanks to those who went into the battle to suffer and die in order to save their country from decay and on behalf of humanity to liberate the colored race from slavery. They succeeded, and we, good and loyal citizens of this great Republic, respectfully bow in memory of those to whom honor is due for this great achievement.

"But we who are assembled here are not Americans, only. Our hearts burn with ardent love for two countries, and thus we think with pride of those Bohemians who, in going to the war, followed their patriotism as Americans, their American conviction. With the sense of justice and the feeling of pity for the weak and enslaved which is inborn in Bohemians, they fought valiantly and died with the satisfaction of having done their manly duty toward their new

country. Honor to their memory--and may there be no more wars! But ... should this beautiful country of ours again get into war, should it again be in peril, then may there be more such monuments as the one we see before us in every Bohemian cemetery. Let the world learn that the Bohemians know how to fight for justice and truth overseas, just as they ever fought in Bohemia. Let America learn that she has taken into her great family members of an honorable nation--a nation whose sons are always ready to seal with blood their pledge of love and devotion to the land of their choice and to its liberty.



A postcard of the Bohemian Civil War Veterans Monument, postmarked 1913

Donations

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(\$1000 and above)

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Patrons

(\$500—\$999)

Robert Kubicka & Claire Smith

Sponsors

(\$100—\$499)

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“Tony” Hanuska

James J. Fergle

First Czechoslovak Garden

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Jean Reichel

Jacqueline Solfronk, Ph.D.

Marge Sladek Stueckemann in

memory of charter member

Tony Hanuska

Jeffrey Tucek

John Voss

Rose Vytlacil

Thank You

(\$1—\$24)

Edward Cechura

Sharon Larson

Al & Rita Pavlas

Patt Kopecky Salvino

Omlouvám se!

In our last issue, I made several errors in transcribing the names of donors. Here are the correct names:

Sponsors (\$100—\$499)

Patricia Krizek Devoe

Judy Lovaas

Janet Neal in memory of James and Jennie Smidl

Thank you all for your generosity. Your gifts help preserve and restore Bohemian National Cemetery.

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"But we have not come here to remember only those who defended with arms the integrity of the United States and human rights. We Freethinkers also gratefully remember those who fought with a mere pen for our spiritual progress, for our right to think freely, to think as we believe it proper. They also knew how to suffer; they also knew the strain of a struggle; and their names are also in our devoted memory. This day is therefore a double holiday for us—may they never be forgotten!

"In full appreciation we turn our thoughts to those who dream their eternal dreams here in the shade of trees and flowers, and who, when living among us, taught us never to forget our old home, to love and esteem our native tongue. Let us honor today the

memory of all those who did and taught what is good... Here in the beauty of rejuvenated nature we think of life, not of death... We have come to remind one another of our duty of mutual helpfulness, our duty of working for everything great and noble, for the good of mankind..."

Mr. Vraz's speech left a most profound impression with all who heard it. ... After this speech the inmates of the Orphanage, under the direction of their vocal teacher, Mrs. Dusek, sang the Bohemian national anthem, "Kde Domov Muj" (Where Is My Home)...

[T]he attendance at the Cemetery was enormous... This is definite proof of the popularity enjoyed by this national property of ours, a property of which not only the Bohemians of Chicago, but also all of Bohemian-America may justly be proud....



Milada Benca shares a memory of BNC: "When I was a child, my parents went to the cemetery on "Decoration Day" which then became "Memorial Day". We brought plants that had been raised in a glassed-in box in the yard. And there was a lunch. My brother and I were allowed to walk through the cemetery while they planted. I first walked to the entrance where the oldest graves were. There I would always stop at the site of a child's grave (about 9 years old) who died in the 1890s. There was a long obit. I always thought to myself that she never got old...so sad. And then farther on...in the 20's there were 2 sisters who died in an auto accident. Their photos were there. They, too, never got older. When I returned to my parents, they washed their hands and we had a picnic!

Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

week to the City of Chicago's chemical waste dump. Some of the other chemicals, like degreasers, can be used by **Steve** in the garage, and the weed killer containers will be given to **Dugo**, if he can use them.

Chuck Cervenka found a company in Washington state that had the parts needed to fix the electric heater from the northeast wall of the north gatehouse. Chuck and Andy Bultas reinstalled the repaired heater in January. With both heaters now working and all the storm windows installed, the north gatehouse is now more comfortable when used for various affairs.

John Illse and Dave Pimm, Jr., installed flush valves on the urinals in the men's bathroom in the crematorium to help conserve water. A sink will be installed inside the morgue, along with a hot water heater for the sink.

In mid-February, as a result of heavy rains, water was found to be

pouring into the back stage area in the south part of the crematorium/columbarium building. Allendorfer Roofing provided a temporary fix for the roof and submitted a proposal for a permanent repair. On February 20th, Chuck Michalek, Chuck Cervenka and Andy Bultas met with Mitchell Dardon of Dardon Roofing and Construction, regarding a second proposal for repairing the crematorium south wall and roof. Mitchell had climbed onto the roof and taken pictures of the roof, walls and gutters. He showed what problems he found and discussed how to rectify them. His proposal will be submitted to the Bohemian National Cemetery Board. During the meeting with Mitchell Dardon, the problem with the Ceremony Hall dome leak was raised. Mitchell said he would check out the dome and get back with a proposal for that repair, too.

During the last two weeks of February, the Chicago area sustained two heavy snowfalls. The cemetery employees have kept the roads open and have continued to conduct

burials. The cemetery looked like a winter wonderland with all the snow.

Come to the cemetery and see our new linden trees from the Czech Republic. The trees were given to **American Sokol**, the parent organization of the various Sokols. **Jean Hruby** was in charge of finding a group that would plant them. Jean contacted me, as I am a Trustee on the BNC board, to see if the cemetery would like them. I checked with Phil Roux, who welcomed the gift. Frank Saballus and I transported the trees to the cemetery in Frank's van, and Gethsemene planted them on the west side of the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum.

There are many wonderful things to view at Bohemian National Cemetery. There have been many improvements made at the cemetery. Come out and enjoy our wonderful grounds.

Andy Bultas
Vice-President

A Gift from Friends

At the Friends Board Meeting in January, the board voted to purchase a Yard Sport light utility vehicle for the cemetery. It can carry two people, has a snowplow, a rear basket to hold flowers, and a canvas roof. The funds used to purchase the vehicle came out of monies raised by book sales and tours. The Bohemian National Cemetery Association sent us the following:

Printed card:

If it weren't for great people like you,
there wouldn't be grateful people like us!

Their personal message:

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for buying us the new utility vehicle. It will be put to good use!! And, as always, we so appreciate everything you do.

The Board of Directors and Staff at BNC



*Friends of Bohemian
National Cemetery*

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Libertyville, IL 60048

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Email: mdstueck@aol.com



we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



**It's not too late! Make your reservation today for *SpringFest*,
our spring fundraiser, Sunday, May 5th,
at Porretta's Elegant Banquets, in Chicago, Illinois!**

Enjoy hors d'oeuvres, dinner, and traditional dances performed by the Moja Vlast Czech-Slovak Dancers of Milwaukee. Our reception (with cash bar) begins at 12:30 pm, followed by dinner at 1:30 pm. Our silent auction will feature cemetery history books, historic Sokol postcards, beautiful china, and just-plain-fun surprises.



Help restore the front doors and entryway of the crematorium/columbarium building. Purchase an ad in our SpringFest booklet to honor your ancestors or advertise your business. Donate auction items. Invite family and friends to join you, and reserve a table for ten. Cost is \$75 per person; contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

**For more information or to make your reservations,
go to www.friendsofbnc.org
or call Marge before April 15th at 847-362-9036.**

