

# Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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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



## Inside this issue:

Officers	2
from the editor's laptop	2
Děkuji Vám	2
What's New with Friends	3
Live from the Cemetery	3
Stories of the Stones - Spikings, An Early Pioneer Family	4
Memorial Day	5
Donations	7
New Members	7
Upcoming Events at BNC	7
Friends Summer Meeting	8

## Dome Roof Will Be Repaired in 2017!



## Work Is Underway

### A Major Step Towards Weatherproofing the Historic Crematorium/Columbarium Building

by Chuck Michalek

Friends of BNC's Columbarium Restoration Project achieved a major objective this past month when work began on the long awaited dome roof repair and restoration.

As described in the July 2014 edition of *Heritage Happenings*, Friends hired a preservation architect to assess Bohemian National Cemetery's historic 1913 crematorium/columbarium building in order to identify and prioritize steps for weatherproofing it. Commissioning a detailed master plan was necessitated when leaks were observed originating from the dome area and exterior side walls, forcing Friends to suspend further restoration of the Ceremony Hall's interior decorative wall painting.

Recommendations from the report indicated several significant areas requiring immediate attention: the dome/roof area; the exterior limestone walls, which had significant crumbling and cracks in the building's limestone ledges, lintels and vertical surfaces; and the front terrace and steps (because the crumbling stairs and loose

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## Restoration Begins!



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handrails were a safety hazard). Friends funded the replacement of the terrace and stairs first and then paid for new handrails, as reported in previous newsletters.

To address the roof problem, three qualified roofing contractors were contacted and asked to submit proposals to repair and restore the columbarium's dome roof. After reviewing each proposal, Friends recommended Knickerbocker Roofing Company to the BNCA Board of Directors, which has final responsibility for maintenance and repair of all BNC buildings. Knickerbocker has a reputation for quality work on historic buildings, such as Wrigley Field and several on the University of Chicago campus.

Knickerbocker's report indicated the main dome, covered with Ludowici French red clay tiles, drains into a copper box gutter assembly around the perimeter, with drainage into four copper downspouts. The top of the dome roof is capped by an ornamental copper finial that also

functions as a roof vent. Several water penetration sites were identified. At the May BNCA Board meeting, representatives from Knickerbocker reviewed and discussed their proposal and answered questions from the board members. The BNCA Board voted to hire Knickerbocker for the dome/roof project, with funds provided by Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery.

The roof repairs were started at the end of June and are anticipated to be finished by mid-August. Several additional problems were discovered as the work began with the removal of old materials. For example, the present gutter placement and inadequate sizing of the gutters likely resulted in overflows during heavy rain conditions and in snow-ice-melt conditions.

BNCA and Friends boards will be kept informed on the progress of the work. Articles in *Heritage Happenings* and on our website will update Friends members and donors funding

the preservation of the crematorium/columbarium building. Your financial support is greatly needed and greatly appreciated. This fall, Friends of BNC will announce the "Bridging the Past to the Future" capital campaign to generate funds for the next phase of this historic building's restoration.



*The photo above shows the preparation of the area where the dome roof meets the stone wall of the drum (the round part) of the building. New improved copper flashing, gutters and scupper boxes (which collect rainwater and funnel it into the downspouts) will be installed.*

*Photos courtesy of Chuck Michalek*

# Roof Work on Columbarium Dome Completed

*by Chuck Michalek*

As outlined in the July 2017 issue of *Heritage Happenings*, repair work commenced on June 20, 2017, on the dome roof of Bohemian National Cemetery's historic crematorium/

columbarium. Fortunately, good weather and only one minor work addition to the proposed contracted work resulted in Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving

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## Roof Work on Columbarium Dome Completed

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Company successfully completing the roof repair by the middle of August.

The scope of the work fulfilled by Knickerbocker included: inspection of and, where necessary, replacement of damaged red Ludowici field tiles; removal of the old copper gutters, drip edge and copper shelf on the top stone ledge; installation of Grace Ice and Water shield, a waterproofing

underlayment, around the dome's perimeter; and fabrication and installation of new 24-ounce copper gutters, drip edge and top shelf and downspout scupper boxes. Other work included removal of the original copper saddle and flashing around the large chimney, and installation of additional waterproofing material and copper flashing at the base of the chimney. Finally, repairs were made to the copper finial at the top of the dome roof. The sloped area

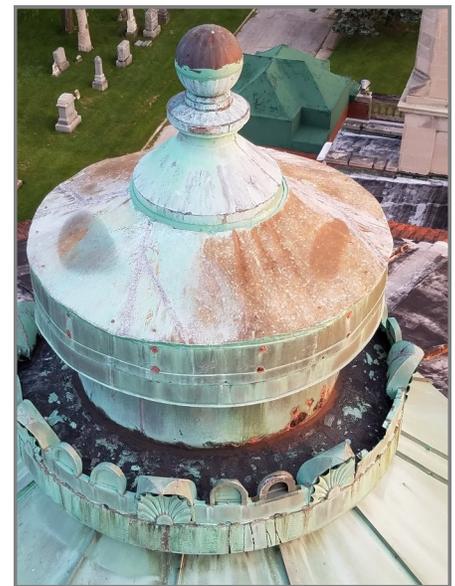
below the finial was repaired and covered with a patina green AlphaGuard membrane with reinforcing fabric.

When standing outside the building at ground level, it may be difficult to comprehend and appreciate the import of this project. The repair and renovation of the



*Before photos (on left and right) and after photos (below) of the copper dome and finial on the crematorium/columbarium building.*

*Photos courtesy of Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving Co.*





dome roof will substantially contribute to the preservation of John Mallin's beautiful decorative paint scheme on the interior ceiling and walls in the Ceremony Hall. Your support and contributions to Friends of BNC for the past years made these critical repairs and improvements possible. The board of the Friends of BNC thanks you and looks forward to sharing with you the next phases of the Columbarium Restoration Project.

**Chuck Michalek**  
**Special Projects Co-Chair**



*After removing the decaying materials (above), Knickerbocker installed new weatherproofing membrane and added 24-ounce copper features, including flashing, drip edges and downspout scupper boxes. Photos courtesy of Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving Co.*



## Columbarium Restoration Project...Next Steps

One can imagine the toll Chicago's extreme weather inflicts on the century-old exterior of BNC's crematorium/columbarium building. With the recent completion of the repairs to the building's dome roof, the Columbarium Restoration Committee now turns its attention to further priorities recommended by historic preservation professionals in their assessment of the building. Significant building repairs still needed to restore the integrity of the building include:

- rebuilding the upper curved stone wall below the dome, including, as needed, the balustrade and cornices, and replacing the steel lintels (horizontal supports) above the art-glass windows;
- resetting the coping (sloping areas) at the projecting roofs and north and south walls;
- masonry restoration of the east, west and south walls, including replacing steel lintels.

To help raise the extensive funding required to complete this repairs, the Columbarium Restoration Committee is currently

discussing with BNCA's Board of Directors the idea of creating a donor wall to recognize outstanding



financial donors to the restoration of the crematorium/columbarium building. Contributing individuals and organizations would be permanently inscribed on this wall and be memorialized as supporters who helped maintain the legacy and heritage represented by this historic building. Watch for future details.

If you would like more information on how you can contribute to or be a part of the

crematorium/columbarium's restoration, contact carol smetana at [editor@friendsofbnc.org](mailto:editor@friendsofbnc.org) or Chuck Michalek at [michalekchas@aol.com](mailto:michalekchas@aol.com).

**Chuck Michalek**  
**Chair,**  
**Columbarium Restoration**  
**Committee**

# Columbarium Restoration Project Update

## by Chuck Michalek

The Columbarium Restoration Committee continues to develop strategies for attracting donors to support the multi-year Columbarium Restoration Project. As noted in a previous newsletter, a major accomplishment involved this past summer's dome roof repairs and gutter replacement.

The next phase will address the limestone exterior walls. This will require extensive masonry restoration that will include: installing new steel lintels over windows; repointing mortar joints; repairing or replacing limestone coping and balustrade edges; sealing cornice joints; repairing spalling and steel anchors where needed, etc.

To publicly acknowledge individuals and organizations who contribute to the

restoration project, the committee is discussing with the BNCA Board of Directors the development of a donor recognition area near the Ceremony Hall. Watch for more developments in future newsletter issues. If you would like more information on this project, please contact the Columbarium Restoration Project chairperson, Chuck Michalek, c/o

Friends of BNC, PO Box 72746,  
Roselle, IL 60172-0746, or via  
email [michalekchas@aol.com](mailto:michalekchas@aol.com).



*Friends of BNC and the Columbarium Restoration Committee want to especially thank Mrs. Jean Uhlir for her significant contribution to the Columbarium Restoration Project, made in memory of her daughter Linda. According to Mrs. Uhlir, Linda, a member of Friends, had a special place in her heart for Bohemian National Cemetery. Mrs. Uhlir noted it is important to preserve historic places like BNC in order that future generations can continue to view and appreciate its special qualities and significance.*

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## Columbarium Project Update

**BNC's historic Columbarium** building was constructed between 1913 and 1919. If you are counting, that means 100 years ago today, this impressive Renaissance Revival style building was in the final phase of its old-world craftsman construction.

**Perhaps the outside wall's last** limestone block was being crafted and shaped by an expert stonecutter. Imagine one of the

large, classic, stained-glass windows being installed a century ago, infusing for the first time a golden glow of light into the Ceremony Hall. One may also visualize the final stroke of paint and gold leafing being applied by Moravian-born artist John Mallin, whose glorious ornamental patterns and emblems adorn the interior and can be admired to this

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## Live from BNC

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day.

The goal of Friends of **BNC's Columbarium** Restoration Project is to help ensure this building survives well into the future. The **ravages of time and Chicago's** brutal weather patterns have already taken their toll. According to architectural preservationists, now is the time to act.

Perhaps your interest is keeping alive the spirit of your Bohemian, Moravian or Slovak ancestors who dedicated their time, talent and resources to create a monument to their heritage

and to keep alive a remembrance of their loved ones. The building as well as the countless family stories represented in the unique niches is unlike any other columbarium.

Or, if you admire old-world craftsmanship, you can help **support the building's** preservation so it can be admired for generations to come.

Friends of BNC has already raised funds to pay for first-**step improvements.** Friend's Columbarium Restoration committee is currently **discussing with BNC's Board** of Directors the establishment

of an on-going fundraising campaign. Organizations, families and individuals can play a vital by contributing to this fund. Plans are now underway to install a crafted donor wall to recognize different levels of contributors. Watch for information on how you can **contribute Friends of BNC's** Columbarium Restoration campaign.

**Chuck Michalek**  
**Chair,**  
**Columbarium Restoration**  
**Committee**