



Columbarium Restoration Project Update

This fall, another phase of the multi-year Columbarium Restoration Project was begun. The



current work addresses important repairs to the building's north façade, which includes the main entrance, cheek walls and center stairway leading to the portico entryway. Scaffolding has been installed to complete power washing, grinding of mortar joints, and mortar restoration on the north exterior wall. One hundred years of Chicago's winter freeze-thaw cycle have caused extensive deterioration and separation to large curved limestone slabs

at the cheek walls. Stabilization, realignment and both mortar and caulking are utilized to correct the decades-old deterioration. The upper limestone stairway is also receiving cleaning and caulking to prevent water seepage into open areas under the stairway.

The ongoing restoration is made possible by our many generous donors and grants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. Watch for ongoing updates in future editions of the newsletter and on our website at friendsofbnc.org.

We are reminded of the importance of the crematorium-columbarium's restoration as reflected in these comments made in 1913 while celebrating the



start of the building's construction: "Let us remember that this building will survive us, that it will



stand when those who speak our beautiful Bohemian language are probably fewer in number ... this building will remain as a permanent monument to their efforts and their Bohemian characteristics ..."

Chuck Michalek
CRP Chair



Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

again contracted to repair sections of BNC’s roadways.

Another ongoing maintenance concern involves falling trees and branches, which continue to be removed by Chuck Betzold’s weekly team of volunteer “lumberjacks.” Our ongoing appreciation is extended to volunteers and donors who help maintain the cemetery.

Recent visitors to BNC included several employees from CSA Fraternal Life’s main office. Anna Thrush, CSA Compliance Officer, and Kelly Deegan, Fraternal Programs Manager, visited some of our historic buildings and monuments. BNCA and CSA enjoy a longstanding

fraternal relationship going back to the cemetery’s founding. During BNC’s centennial year of 1977, there were 27 CSA lodges who sponsored BNCA delegates. Members of CSA’s network of fraternal lodges continue to



CSA Fraternal Life employees Kelly Deegan (left) and Anna Thrush in front of the CSA symbol in Ceremony Hall

serve as both BNCA delegates and board members and participate in yearly volunteer Join Hands Day activities at BNC.

This past fall, Prague magazine writer Markéta Pilátová visited BNC, accompanied by Ondřej Pometlo, Czech Republic Deputy Consul General in Chicago. In her article, written for the Czech-language magazine *Respekt*, Ms. Pilátová described her trip to the cemetery and her admiration of its historic legacy and the fraternal spirit evident during her visit.

Chuck Michalek
Friends of BNC Volunteer
Wednesday Volunteer

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Last year marked a significant accomplishment for Friends in achieving some of the goals set out in the 2014 “Survey and Master Plan for the Columbarium/Memorial Hall Building” document. In fall 2022, thanks to ongoing donations and support, significant repairs and improvements were made to the crematorium/columbarium building’s north façade and main stairway entrance. One of the challenges involved repositioning large limestone segments of the cheek walls, which had begun to shift out of alignment due to

Chicago’s freeze-thaw cycles. Replacing these large curved limestone pieces would have been cost-prohibitive. The recent work repositioned pieces to stabilize them and allow for grinding and repointing of connecting joints. Sealants and caulk were used to seal stairway intersections, and the entire north façade received a power wash followed by grinding and repointing of masonry. Be sure to check out the improvements during your next visit to BNC.

Much of the planning and communication with contractors and the BNCA

Board involved a dedicated committee of volunteers and Friends of BNC members: Chuck Michalek (chair), Linda Tassin and Chuck Betzold (see photo page 6).

