

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Fall Issue ~ Vol. 13 No. 2

October 2016

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

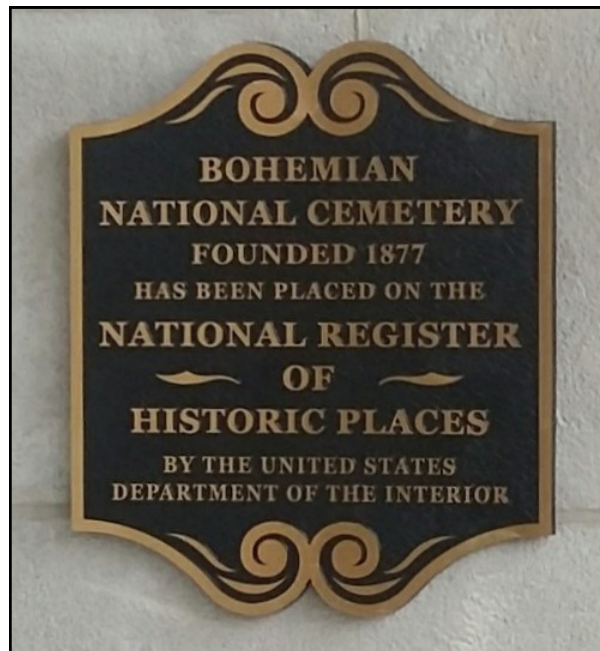
The beautiful bronze plaque commemorating the 2006 placement of Bohemian National Cemetery on the National Register of Historic Places was unveiled from under a Czech flag at our August 21st meeting. **Angie Bultas**, who worked tirelessly with **Phil Roux**, our alderman **Margaret Laurino**, and with much support from the then Illinois

treasurer **Judy Baar Topinka**, made a short presentation along with **Joe Topinka**, our new co-

chair of fundraising. Joe spoke of the passion his mom had for BNC. The plaque will be in place on the wall to the west of the entry to the office by the time you read this!

Our August 21st program was a screening of the film found in the board room closet of 16 mm footage from the late 1940's and 1952, converted to a DVD and set to very appropriate music (the original film was silent).

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Live from BNC

The summer months at the cemetery have been very rainy with the temperatures varying from hot to cold. Keeping the cemetery's grass looking presentable has been difficult, as the mowers sink in the wet grass. **Chuck Betzold** and his friend **Jim Miller** have been cutting up the fallen branches and removing them. **Jerry Gaydusek**

and **Chuck Michalek**, who are members of the BNCA Audit Committee in addition to being volunteers, have been checking on the cemetery's equipment and making sure that the maintenance is up-to-date. They also have been doing minor repair work as needed.

Empty Bottle

Productions presented a well-attended concert on June 19th at the Masaryk Mausoleum. Among those in attendance were: BNCA president **David Pimm** and general manager **Beth Raleigh**; **Stephan Altrichter**, **Tomáš Končinský** and **Irene Tichaček** of the Letní Film School, Czech Republic;

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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 editor@friendsofbnc.org.

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from Chuck Betzold's laptop

A couple of weeks ago I was interviewed by Chicago's NBC-TV in front of the Cubs Wall—Beyond the Vines—at Bohemian National Cemetery. When I left the house on the morning of the interview, something told me to bring some baseball-related memorabilia to decorate the wall. So I found the old shoebox of sports tickets that I've been saving for 35 years and grabbed a handful.

Before the interview began, I affixed my Cubs tickets onto the marble slabs of the wall. To the left of the 400-foot mark, I placed two tickets from the 2008 National League Division Series. My son and I were at that game, and the Cubs broke our hearts. It was game two of the series, which the Cubs lost 7-2. In that game, the Dodgers took advantage of sloppy Cubs fielding as the entire infield committed four errors—one by each starting infielder—totaling up to five unearned runs, including four in a five-run second inning. My son, who is a die-hard Cubs fan, had never asked me to leave a game before it was over. On that night he suggested we leave early.

The two tickets I placed to the right of the 400-foot mark are from a meaningless game against the San Diego Padres played decades ago —“meaningless” in the sense that the Cubs were not in contention that year. They are on the future niche for my father, who is rooting for the Cubs this week as if his life depends on it. He is 93 years old. We're all hoping the Cubs can win this Series for him before he passes.

For as long as I can remember, Dad has reminisced about the last time the Cubs were in the World Series and how he and some of his twenty-something buddies were caught trespassing onto one of the rooftops across Sheffield Avenue. It was during one of the last Cub games at Wrigley Field against the eventual Series winner, the Detroit Tigers. Dad and his buddies were locked up at the local police station, not far from Wrigley Field, and turned loose as soon as the game ended. Not a proud moment for my family but a tale we've heard over and over again at every family gathering.

So if you've read stories or heard reports about the Chicago Cubs this baseball season and have wondered why Cubs fans are so impassioned about the past, the simple answer: There are some things we never forget. Ever.

I'm hoping that Chuck Michalek and I can place some kind of Cubs “W” flag on our Beyond the Vines columbarium wall sometime next week to commemorate a World Series winner in Chicago. And I'm sure we'll definitely reminisce while we're there.

Editor's note: Both Chuck B. and Chuck M. are active BNC volunteers. The interview can be found at <http://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/cubs-mausoleum-bohemian-national-cemetery-chicago-burial-397157641.html?t=30>. The article that prompted Chuck to share his personal history with the Cubs can be found here: <http://www.npr.org/2016/10/26/499466525/cubs-fans-decorate-grave-sites-of-loved-ones-across-chicago-area>

Děkuji Vám!

Andy Bultas for many years of excellent service on our board and for being willing to continue to write his quarterly “Live from the Cemetery” column

Chuck Betzold for leading a BNC tour for the Albany Park Library group, working on the bronze plaque dedication, making our

wonderful signs on the fence, and meeting with contractors about the stair project

Chuck Michalek for leading tours of the cemetery for the Czech delegation led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for a group of high school students from Prague

Arlene Artist and **Mary Syrup** for hosting our August 21st meeting and providing treats; Mary also hosted solo for the September 24th tours

Helen Gaydusek for also helping with treats for the meeting



Charles and Martha Cervenka, New Directors Emeriti of Friends of BNC

by Chuck Michalek

Charles and Martha Cervenka are regarded as “BNC legends” by the many staff and volunteers who have had the honor and pleasure of knowing and working with them. They were a vital part of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery’s early development and assisted with countless projects and activities sponsored by Friends of BNC. In addition to their faithful service as Bohemian National Cemetery Association delegates and board members, they were among the earliest volunteers dedicating their time and talents at BNC. Indeed, they were always eager to “roll up their sleeves” when assisting with the various tasks at the cemetery.

As part of the cemetery’s governing structure, Charles and Martha were long-time BNCA delegates representing the First Czechoslovak Garden Club of America, one of the many Czech organizations they faithfully served. As a delegate, Martha was elected by the Assembly of Delegates to serve as Secretary to the Board of Directors, preceded by her service on BNCA’s Auditing and Oversight Committee. Charles also

served as a long-time Delegate and was elected by the Assembly of Delegates to serve as a Board Trustee. In addition to her administrative duties as a BNCA Board

member, Martha frequently helped plant and maintain outdoor plants around BNC’s historic monuments and gatehouse. In the office, Martha frequently reviewed and helped organized current and historic files. Charles’ long-time work experience as an engineer earned him the respected name of “Pán engineer” among his fellow volunteers (*pán* is Czech for Mr.). His exhaustive mechanical and engineering knowledge proved invaluable when tackling the endless maintenance and repair issues throughout the cemetery grounds. Martha and Charles not only contributed their work talents but were generous in making numerous unheralded contributions that helped maintain the normal day-to-day operations at the cemetery. Whether it was providing supplies for the office or locating a mechanical part for one of BNC’s vehicles, the Cervenkas were much

appreciated for their endless contributions to BNC’s operations.

Those who knew them at BNC, often appreciated seeing a decades-old picture of Charles and Martha marching in a BNC parade more than fifty years ago. It is a reminder of the timeless and dedicated love Martha

and Charles brought to BNC for which members of Friends of BNC, the staff and volunteers at BNC will always be grateful.



Stories of the Stones—John Kralovec (1849–1931)

by John Fortelka

I grew up with the knowledge that my great-grandfather John Kralovec had been in the brewery business, but as anyone who researches family history knows, there are often surprises, and “family history my mother never told me.”

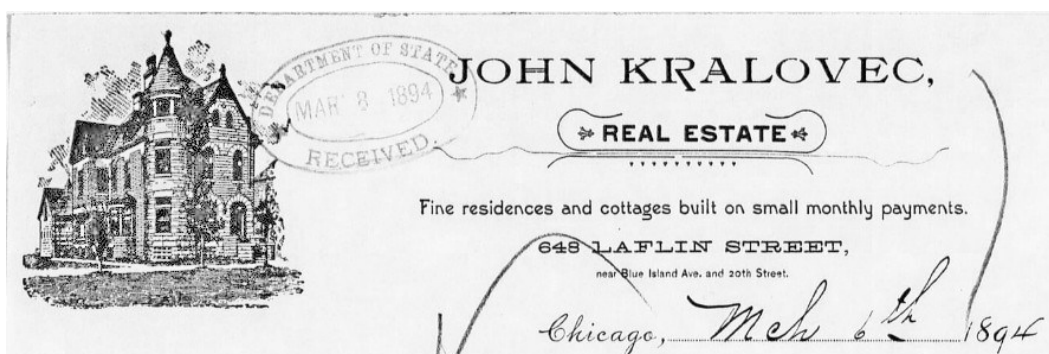
John was born in March 1849 in Nevolice, a small village two miles south of Domažlice in the Plzeň region of what is today the Czech Republic. He emigrated at the age of 19,

but while growing up had acquired skills in the building trades, including bricklaying. He sailed from Bremen in May 1868, arrived in New York and made his way to Chicago a few days later. His first job was at a lumberyard, but shortly thereafter was working regularly as a bricklayer and stone mason. He joined the German bricklayers union, and then a few years later helped found the Bohemian bricklayers union.

When the Great Chicago Fire started in October 1871, John was living two blocks due east of ground zero, on south Canal Street. In the aftermath of the fire, he was in the right place at the right time with the right talents to take advantage of the demand for men with construction and bricklaying skills. John prospered and by 1878 had started his own construction company. His brother James Martin, who had emigrated in 1874 and completed business college, joined John’s construction business;

the 1881 city directory lists James as his “foreman.”

In 1883 the brothers formed “John Kralovec & Bro.,” specializing in building one-story homes on the burgeoning west side of Chicago. Later they constructed two-story homes, which they marketed with



monthly payments of \$10 to \$25. An 1887 book on notable businesses in Chicago declared that the firm “exhibits an excellent reputation for skill and reliability” and “work of every description is executed in the most superior and expeditious manner.”

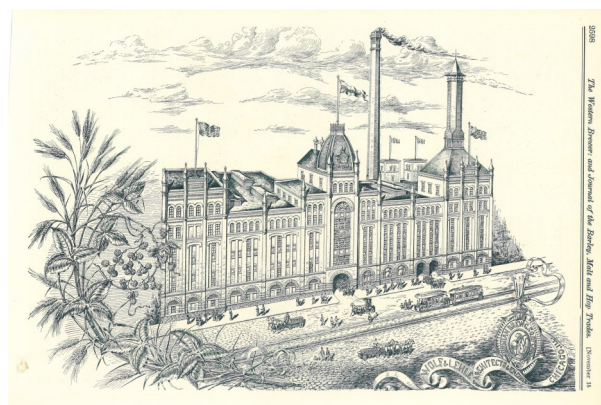
By 1890, John was in the real estate business full-time, having seen that the expansion of the streetcar line to the west side into the area presented an opportunity for property development. He bought and subdivided empty land in the area and was on his way to becoming a real estate magnate. Between 1892 and 1894 he built five houses on Avers Avenue, which were designated as the “Five Houses on Avers Avenue District” by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in 1994.

In 1873 John married Julia Kubin. The Kubins had emigrated in 1867 and moved to Chicago in 1868. The family lived about two blocks north of John, at 88 Forquer; Julia’s father Martin worked at St. Wenceslaus as a teacher and organist, while her mother Antonie was at home with the four children, Julia, Victoria,

Marie and Otto. Martin, unfortunately, had died during the Fire of a heart attack. Otto Kubin went into the banking business with Charles

Vopicka (“Vopicka & Kubin”). A year after John and Julia’s wedding, her sister Marie was back at St. Wenceslaus marrying his their best man, Jan Geringer, the younger brother of August, the publisher, and founder of the newspaper Svornost. A few years later the third sister Victoria married Charles Vopicka.

In 1891, John Kralovec, Charles Vopicka and Otto Kubin together founded the Bohemian Brewing Company (renamed Atlas Brewing



Bohemian Brewing Company



Company in 1896). John was the president, Charles the vice-president, and Otto the treasurer. Atlas became extremely successful and was one of the few breweries in

Chicago to survive Prohibition.



By 1900, John epitomized the American dream: a rags-to-riches success story from immigrant bricklayer to wealthy real estate developer,

photo of John Kralovec from Zlatá Kniha Československého Chicaga, published in 1926, R.J. Pšenka, editor

co-founder of a successful brewery, living in his showcase house on Avers Avenue with wife Julia and five of their children. Active in Chicago ward politics, he served as a member and president of the West Parks Commission and was a generous benefactor to as well as a member of several charities in the Czech community. But in a few years his life would take a decidedly darker turn.

In 1906 Julia died while they were in Wisconsin. Around 1909, John hired a new maid, Antonie Stundl, who had emigrated in 1907 from Bohemia. She was 24 and John was 60. Judging from the description of her in the passenger manifest (blond hair, blue eyes) and a later picture in the paper, Antonie was very attractive, and she and John became "involved." The result was their son Arthur, born in December 1910, two months after Antonie had filed a breach-of-promise suit claiming that John "had stolen her affections"

and then reneged on his promise of marriage. She withdrew her suit, and they were married in Milwaukee in February 1911, but only after she had signed a pre-nuptial agreement.

Less than a year later, in January 1912, Antonie filed for divorce.

According to testimony in the divorce file, John made Antonie leave the Avers Avenue house on January 10, 1912: their daughter Lillian was born two weeks later.

Sadly, their son Arthur died of meningitis before he reached his second birthday, in September 1912, and is buried in the family plot at Bohemian National Cemetery.

A December 1914 newspaper article about the divorce noted that the John and Antonie had engaged in almost continuous legal wrangling since she had filed the original breach-of-promise suit in 1910.

According to the article, she claimed that "he failed to provide her with sufficient clothing, has refused to take her into society, and held her up to ridicule among the neighbors," although, as it turns out, there was more to it than that.

The divorce was final in December 1914, but the drama didn't end there. In 1920, Antonie was declared insane and spent the rest of her life in a state hospital, where she passed away in 1963. Their daughter Lillian, who was eight at the time, spent the next ten years, until her 18th birthday, as a ward of the Cook County Juvenile Court. Where she lived for those ten years is unknown, although John had been awarded visitation in the divorce

decree, and there is no reason to believe he wouldn't have had contact with her during this period. Father and daughter were reunited in 1930 when she turned 18, but the reunion was short-lived: John died the following year of natural causes.



One poignant note: in John's probate file, the inventory listed the items in "Lillian's Room" instead of using a more generic description, e.g., "Bedroom #2."

"John is still searching for family photos of John and Julia, and any of his children, including his daughter Lillian (Kralovec) Farsky; if you know of any please contact him at aivas33@yahoo.com. He would also welcome any stories from your own family histories that may have intersected the Kralovecs at some point.

Donations

June 28, 2016 through September 29, 2016

Sponsors (\$100—\$499)

Marilyn and Elmer Cerny in
memory of Alan James Cerny
Carol and Gerald Vovis

Donors (\$25—\$99)

Vera Bayer in memory of Elmer
James Cerny
Laddie and Lucile Lankas in
memory of Elmer James Cerny
Arlene Szczyrk in memory of
Elmer James Cerny
Marianne Werner in memory of
Elmer James Cerny

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

What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)

Seeing the long parades into the cemetery for Memorial Day in the 1940s and the pageantry of the unveiling of the World Wars I and II Memorial in 1952 made for a very interesting program: hard to remember that graves were dug by hand, grass was mowed with push mowers (no motors), and horses were hitched to hay wagons to work the area where hay was grown to feed the "tractors" of 1940!

We also elected a new Friends board. Thanks to those who are continuing, and welcome to **Mary Syrup**, **Joe Topinka** and **Ray Malecek** who have joined us. Thanks to **Andy Bultas**, who has stepped down after many years of service. An article about **Chuck and Martha Cervenka**, who we are honoring with a new status as Directors Emeriti, is included on page three in this newsletter.

We continue to utilize a grant we received from the Czech Republic to promote Czech culture and

Bohemian National Cemetery to the wider community of people without Czech roots. The local **Albany Park Library** on Foster was very interested in forming a partnership, and last fall we sponsored a talk on historic Czech Chicago plus a talk on the interactive BNC map found on our webpage. This fall we again sponsored a talk on Czech Chicago featuring other famous Czech names, and the **Albany Park Friends of the Library** paid to have a private tour of BNC on October 8th with 14 people attending. Albert Walavich, the usual guide, was ill, but **Chuck Betzold** very ably filled in for him at the last minute. How gratifying to see our non-Czech neighbors so interested in our culture and our cemetery!

The tours on September 24th were very well attended, with about 50 people at both the morning and the afternoon tour. We were especially delighted to have four children attend that day, plus even a dog!

After the tour participants left, we

hosted a group of dignitaries from Prague, including the **Minister of Foreign Affairs Lubomír Zaorálek**. **Chuck Michalek** gave them a very brief tour due to their limited available time. Others who came included **Petr Drulák**, Director of Minister's Cabinet, **Ivana Červenková**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Ivan Jančárek**, Junior Deputy Minister, **Michaela Lagronová**, Press Secretary, **Tomáš Trnka**, Deputy Consul General, and our own Consul General, **Dr. Bořek Lizec** and his wife **Kateřina**.

We have sent in the down payment for the ADA railings to be installed on the steps to replace the current temporary railings. Part of this expense is covered by grant money we received for this purpose from the Czech government.

Come and see how lovely BNC is at this time of the year!!

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President



Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

Bara Havlátová and **Veronika Vrbenská** of Charles University, Prague, who will be teaching summer school at T. G. Masaryk Czech School in Cicero; and **Irena Čajková**, of the T.G. Masaryk School.

On July 24th the cemetery held its annual picnic. There was music, food consisting of sausages and potato pancakes, slurpies and soda. The picnic started at noon and went until about 5 p.m. The weather was quite warm, but there was a nice breeze coming off Lake Michigan which made everything bearable. The picnic was well attended and a good time was had by all.

From July to present **Chuck Betzold**, one of the volunteers, and friends with whom he had grown up, were taking down dead trees in the cemetery and cutting up fallen trees and branches and removing them. Chuck and his friends have been averaging a tree a week. This is a great savings to the cemetery, as the cutting and removal of just one tree is very costly.

On September 24th the cemetery was visited by **Lubomir Zaorálek**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, who came with the Czech Consul General of Chicago, **Bořek Lizek**. Chuck Michalek led them on a tour of the crematorium/columbarium building, the Civil War Monument, the Spanish American War Monument, and the Čermak Mausoleum, where the Minister laid a wreath. The tour ended at the Eastland Disaster Memorial, where the Minister and his group stayed for awhile asking many questions about the disaster. And who better to answer them than Chuck, who was

responsible for the memorial!

The minister and his group were well pleased with the tour. One thing to note about all the dignitaries who come to Bohemian National Cemetery is that they all want to see the Čermak Mausoleum and lay a wreath there. Many of us who reside in the Chicago area fail to realize how important Čermak is in the Czech Republic.

In the middle of August a disaster occurred at Bohemian National Cemetery: the garage roof collapsed. The cemetery is very lucky to have the dedicated employees that they have. Prior to the roof collapsing, the employees were inside the garage and heard cracking sounds. Realizing that the roof was starting to collapse, they began to move the cemetery's equipment out of the garage. As the last piece of equipment was being removed, the roof collapsed.

Cemetery general manager Raleigh contacted the insurance company and is arranging with them to get the building repaired. On October 5th **Staalsen Construction Company, Inc.** of



Chicago came out and shored up the interior of the garage to prevent any more damage from occurring.

As you can see, the upkeep of the cemetery is a never-ending job, and thanks to all its employees and volunteers, it is still here for you to enjoy. Come and bring your family and friends and visit Bohemian National Cemetery. See why people from all over our country and Europe visit the cemetery and are amazed by its history and beauty.

Andy Bultas



Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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Heritage Happenings

we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER

Your membership in Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery is vital to the preservation of our cemetery. As a member, you will receive our quarterly newsletter and be entitled to discounts on merchandise and our "Tours of the Tombstones." Above all, you will enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to maintain, improve and beautify Bohemian National Cemetery.

Our membership year is January - December. This means that **all memberships, except those renewed for two years last year, will expire December 31, 2016.** New members joining in the last quarter of a year (Sept.-Dec.) receive those three months as a bonus, and their membership year begins the following January.

Please send in your renewal now!

Memberships:

One year: \$30 individual; \$40 family;
\$25 senior

Two years: \$55 individual; \$70 family;
\$45 senior

Send renewal form with check payable to
Friends of BNC or with credit card
information to:

Friends of BNC
P.O. Box 72746
Roselle, IL 60172-0746

Membership Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code (+ 4) _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Type of Membership _____

Friends of BNC is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, nonprofit organization. To make a donation to fund improvements at BNC, please write a separate check with a notation on the memo line. Thank you.