

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue ~ Vol. XVI No. 1

July 2019

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

Normally Friends hosts three tours each year, one in spring and two in fall. We have not sponsored any tours this year because of an insurance claim brought against BNCA last year. The claim involved a woman allegedly falling and hurting herself during a "Flashlight Tour" that was not sponsored by Friends. The Bohemian National Cemetery Association Board felt

compelled to temporarily limit tour and volunteer activities that could expose the cemetery to more lawsuits and result in a dramatic cost increase for insurance coverage. Friends will continue to discuss this issue with the cemetery board, as many recognize the considerable positive exposure and benefits tours bring

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As part of their "Join Hands Day" activities at the cemetery, CSA lodge members spruce up the Eastland Centennial Memorial. — photo by Chuck Michalek

Live from BNC

Some of you may recall the old saying, "Many hands make for light work." For many years, Chicagoland CSA Lodge members have participated in "Join Hands Day" at the cemetery. Organized by CSA's Central District Council, this yearly event took place on May 11 and involved

numerous young and old CSA members. Their efforts included cleaning windows and furniture in the historic gatehouse; polishing oak pews and the woodwork in the crematorium/columbarium building's Ceremony Hall; planting and cleaning at the *Eastland*

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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 editor@friendsofbnc.org.

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Gaydusek, Chuck Michalek

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from the editor's laptop

Are there any fellow taphophiles reading this newsletter? When I travel, I like to visit local cemeteries. I'm always on the lookout for interesting monuments and symbolism.

One remarkable cemetery I visited is El Cementerio de Cristóbal Colón, or Colon

(Columbus) Cemetery, in Havana, Cuba. It was constructed between 1871 and 1886, and features funerary art by renowned sculptors. Covering 138 acres, Colón Cemetery is similar in size to Bohemian National Cemetery, but with 800,000 interments, all aboveground, it is definitely not a "garden cemetery" like BNC.



Among the fascinating gravestones at Colón Cemetery is the sarcophagus of Juana Martin de Martin. She was an elderly woman who loved to play dominoes, and the story is that she died of a heart attack

when she lost an important game by misplaying a double-three domino. A larger-than-life marble representation of a double-three domino marks her final resting place.



Na shledanou!
carol jean smetana

Děkuji vám!

For placing flags for Memorial Day:

CIT employees

Timothy Crowley

Terry McCreery

Amy Michalek

Shaul Sondak

Ross Succoso

Ephraim Tomenbang

and Friends volunteers

Jim Trnka

Chuck Betzold

Thelma Malecek who served us well as Membership Chair, but has had to step down due to health concerns

Juli Nelson who has agreed to serve as Membership Chair

Chuck Michalek and **Carol Jean Smetana** for writing the 2020 grant request to the Czech government for road repair funds

Chuck Michalek for his leadership in developing the Donor Wall and also for ordering and installing the name plates



What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)
the cemetery. This insurance difficulty is also the reason there was no Bohemian National Cemetery picnic this July.

We are able to have our usual summer meeting at the cemetery, so put Sunday, August 25th, at 1:30 p.m. on your calendar to join us in cool, air-conditioned comfort in the cemetery office. Chuck Michalek will present a slide show entitled "BNC: Past and Present, Challenges for the Future." Chuck will cover the drama of the cemetery's founding and early years, its

growth and development through the years, and challenges for the future. The office is handicapped accessible. More information on the back page. Hope to see you there!

Our August meeting is also when we elect our officers. We would be glad to have more volunteers for the board, or

for our committees to help with things like refreshments, mailings, etc. Currently we do not have a publicity chair, although Carol Jean Smetana and Juli Nelson do a good job with maintaining our Facebook page. Please let me know if you might like to join us. Contact me at 847-362-9036 or mdstueck@icloud.com. A slate will be presented at the meeting, but if any member would like to offer another candidate, there can be nominations from the floor.

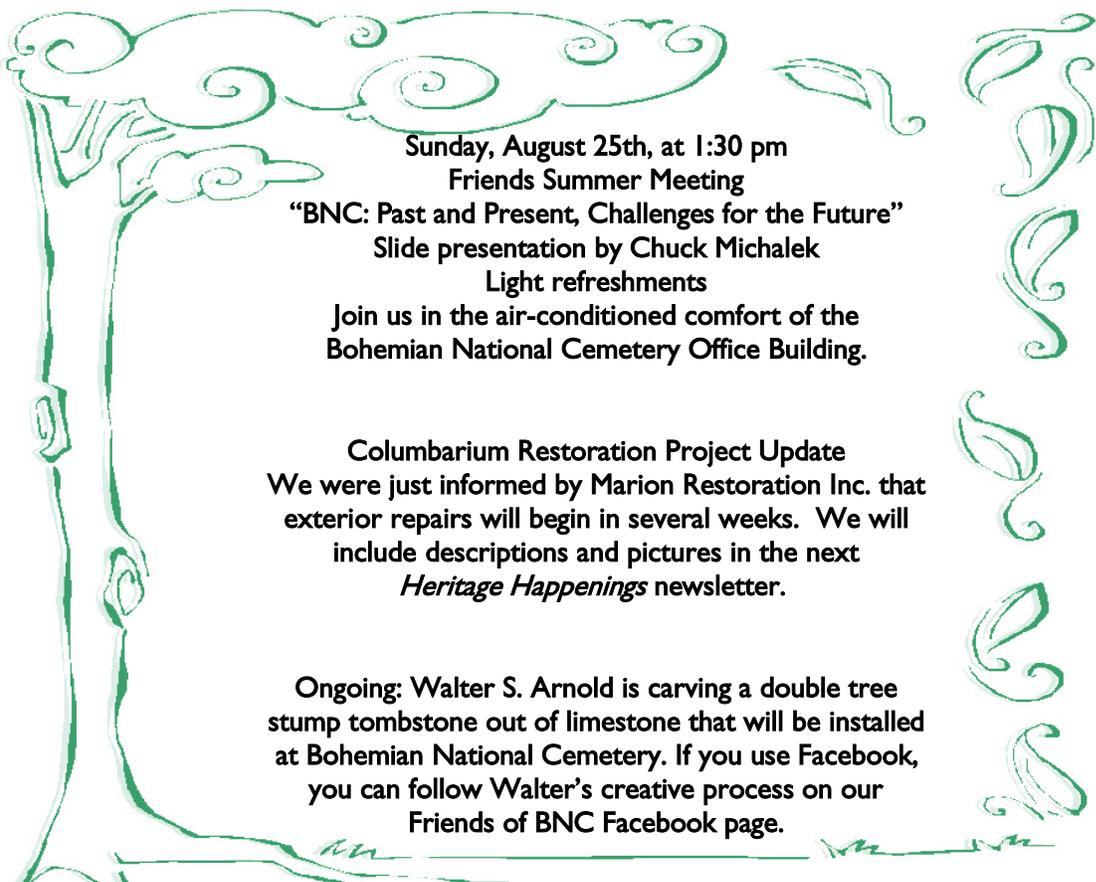
Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

**Welcome to
Our New Members!**

Holly Parker ... Lake Zurich, IL

Mark Svetlik ... Chicago, IL

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery



Sunday, August 25th, at 1:30 pm
Friends Summer Meeting
"BNC: Past and Present, Challenges for the Future"
Slide presentation by Chuck Michalek
Light refreshments
Join us in the air-conditioned comfort of the Bohemian National Cemetery Office Building.

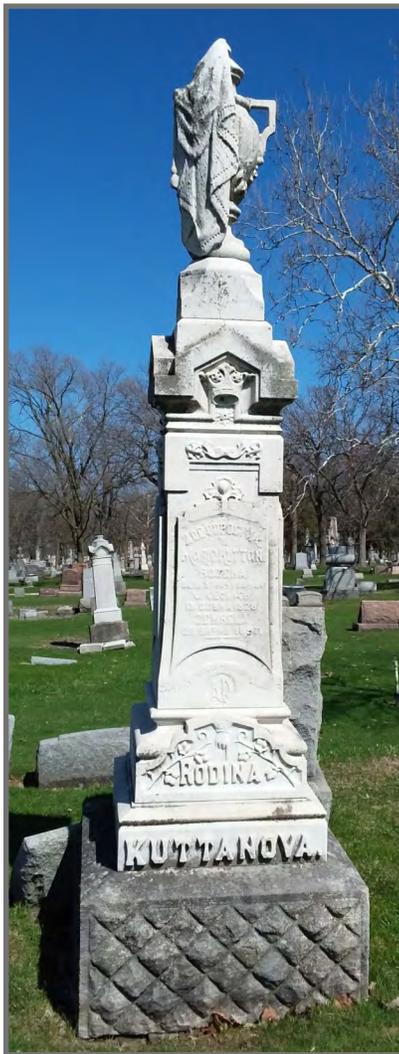
Columbarium Restoration Project Update
We were just informed by Marion Restoration Inc. that exterior repairs will begin in several weeks. We will include descriptions and pictures in the next *Heritage Happenings* newsletter.

Ongoing: Walter S. Arnold is carving a double tree stump tombstone out of limestone that will be installed at Bohemian National Cemetery. If you use Facebook, you can follow Walter's creative process on our Friends of BNC Facebook page.

Stories of the Stones: Kuttan Family Monument

by carol jean smetana

The Kuttan family—Jan, age 34, his wife Mary, 41, and their two children, John Jr., 7, and Mary, 5—



emigrated from Vodňany, southern Bohemia. The steamship *S.S. Rhein* brought them to New York City on October 22, 1869, and they continued on to Chicago. Both Jan and his son worked as carpenters.



The Kuttan family was active in Chicago's Bohemian community. In 1879 mother and daughter were founding members of the Lodge Přemyslovna, the first Chicago lodge of Jednota Českých Dam (Unity of Czech Women). Patriarch Jan belonged to Vyšehrad Lodge No. 48, Č.S.P.S., and when it joined the Bohemian National Cemetery Association in 1880, Jan was one of the lodge's first two delegates.

The Kuttan family monument is near the cemetery gatehouse. Matriarch Mary Kuttan died of peritonitis in 1897 when she was 69 years old. Her husband Jan died two years later. They are both buried here, along with their son John, who died in 1905; John's wife Barbara, who died in 1947 and was the last person buried in the lot; and John and Barbara's son George (d. 1927). Five of Jan and Mary Kuttan's grandchildren, who died as toddlers, are also here.

All four sides of the Kuttan monument are decorated with symbols. The prominent draped urn at the top of the monument was a common symbol of death in the

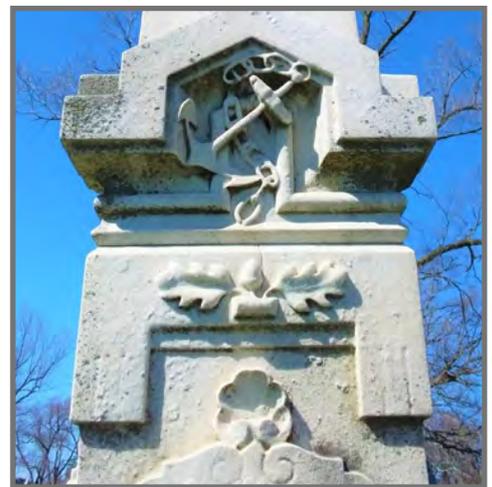
nineteenth century, an expression of sorrow. The crown below it, on the front side, is a symbol of honor and leadership; it can also have a religious connotation as a symbol of the supremacy of God and victory over death.

At the base of the front of the monument, a finger



pointing down represents mortality; in this case, it also draws attention to the family name—"Rodina Kuttanova" — "the Kuttan family."

On another side of the



monument, there is an anchor, a symbol of hope. The anchor has a broken chain, signifying the end of life. The broken chain can also be interpreted as links of

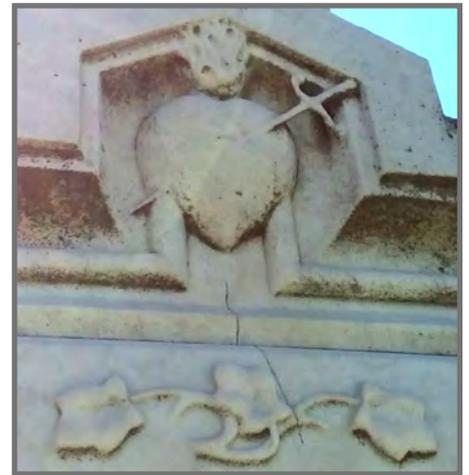


love with a family broken in death. The oak leaves and acorn below the anchor can stand for strength, power, endurance, liberty, prosperity, and triumph of the spirit. The shell below the acorn means rebirth or a journey.

A third side of the monument features a pierced, flaming heart. The pierced heart is a Christian symbol suggesting repentance; the

flames above the heart mean religious devotion. The ivy below the heart is a symbol of immortality and faithfulness, undying affection.

There are more carved symbols on this monument. Some are so weathered that they are difficult to identify. Nevertheless, it is still a beautiful memorial. Look for it next time you're at the cemetery.



Family Remembers the Life of Charles J. Vopicka

by Chuck Michalek

On a recent Sunday morning, descendants of Charles J. Vopicka (1857-1935) gathered at the family burial site in BNC's Section 23. Relatives from his family traveled from as far as way as Europe to reconnect and share stories about his life. In attendance were numerous family members, including three of his five living grandchildren. Also present to honor Vopicka's many contributions was the Consul General of the Czech Republic in Chicago, Jaroslav Kantůrek.

Vopicka immigrated to America in 1880 from the small village of Dolní Hbity. Shortly after arriving in Chicago he started a real estate and business company. In 1891 he along with other investors founded the Bohemian Brewing Co., which became the Atlas

Brewing Co. Vopicka was involved in numerous cultural, political and educational activities locally, nationally and



internationally. He was an acquaintance of Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak and of Czechoslovak President Tomáš G. Masaryk. Eventually he was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson to the post of U. S. Ambassador to the Balkan states of Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia.

After the gravesite

ceremonies, the relatives gathered at BNC's historic gatehouse to share more stories and enjoy refreshments. As part of the Vopicka family

celebration, members of the Pritzker Grade School band played a series of "old time" songs reminiscent of the music from the era in which Vopicka lived. Vopicka's love of education included supporting numerous improvements to Pritzker School: a plaque at the school honors his contributions. A newly planted tree near the

Vopicka gravesite will help keep Vopicka's spirit alive for those who attended the event.

Vopicka was featured in the April 2015 *Heritage Happenings* "Stories of the Stones," in an article written by Anna Cooková, who is a distant relative of Vopicka and teaches lessons on Czech language and culture.

Donations

Benefactors

(\$1000—\$9999)

Donald Jay Fergle *in memory of
Donald and Evelyn (Krenek)
Fergle*

Linda M. Odenbach *in memory of
Rich Odenbach*

Jim Trnka

Patrons

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Meribeth and John Tooke *in honor
of their 53rd wedding
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CSA Lodge Woodrow Wilson #377

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Chuck & Linda Klickmann

Judy Lovaas

Thank You

(\$1—\$24)

Florence Rooney

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

Discover Chicago Through Her Cemeteries in *Chicago Eternal*

What Friends member doesn't appreciate the beauty, art, history, and culture of our cemetery? Native Chicagoan Larry Broutman demonstrates a similar appreciation of Chicago's cemeteries in his magnificent coffee-table book *Chicago Eternal*. Broutman took his camera to thirty-one cemeteries in Chicago (including a few in the near suburbs) to create a unique book sure to draw lovers of photography and history into the ranks of taphophiles (lovers of cemeteries).

Elegant photos of an eclectic array of tombstones, grave markers and monuments are accompanied by often poignant text, providing glimpses of the people and events that shaped the history of Chicago. His main purpose is not to explain in detail the symbology or style of funerary art; rather he desires to share "not only the human stories but the visual richness of cemeteries that is so arresting." He succeeds.

In these pages you'll find the famous—Louis Sullivan, Dinah Washington, Harry Caray, Oscar Mayer—and the not-so-famous—aviatrix Bessie Coleman, painter Martha

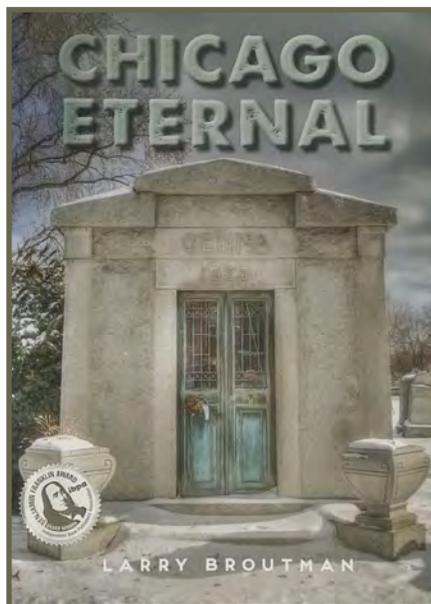
Baker, Supreme Court Justice Melville Weston Fuller, Nobel Prize winner and U.S. vice-president Charles Dawes. And you'll find those known only to a few—six-year-old Lars Schmidt and his two-year-old brother Eddie who died two days apart of diphtheria, WWI casualty Captain Henry Blair Keep, Chicago stockyard workers Teodora Atroska and her husband Mike.

This is the quintessential coffee-table book, a joy to browse. The 336 pages of mostly color photographs, including 13 pages of 3-D photos (3-D glasses included), are organized by cemetery into chapters. Bohemian National Cemetery covers 12 pages; St. Adalbert's has six pages.

I found a few errors in the book—for instance, Mayor Anton Cermak was born in Kladno,

Bohemia, not "in Austria of Bohemian descent." "Obeti eastlandu" translates to "Eastland victims," not "Eastlandia victim." But these are minor and do not detract from the wonders offered in the pages of the book.

Heritage Happenings readers can get \$10 off the \$55 price of the book by ordering it at www.everythinggoesmedia.com/store, using coupon code STONE10. ~ carol jean smetana





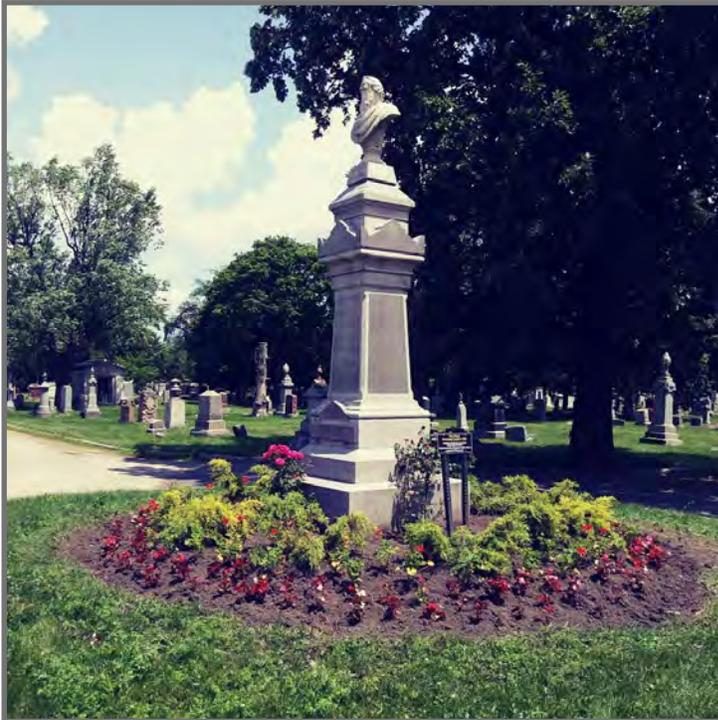
Live from BNC

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Centennial Memorial; and walking the grounds to pick up trash. Our thanks to Ken Dvorsky, District Council President, who

replacement of pipes under the gatehouse, which had been leaking for some time. Repairs to buildings, machinery, and tree removal all contribute to the

Čajková, who teaches at the T.G. Masaryk School in Cicero. Irena was contacted by Gabriela Havlůjová from Kladno, Czech Republic; Kladno is the birthplace of Mayor Anton Cermak. Representatives from Kladno donated flowers to be placed at the Cermak family mausoleum on his birthday, May 9th, as a remembrance from his home town.



Klachel Circle — photo by Chuck Michalek

organized the event for CSA and to the many CSA volunteers who participated.

Speaking of volunteers, please keep long-time volunteer Jerry Gaydusek in your thoughts and prayers as he recovers from a serious medical operation.

In June, a professional plumbing company was hired to make extensive repairs to some of the old plumbing fixtures, including

challenges of keeping BNC alive.

If you visit BNC, stop by Klachel Circle and view the new plantings surrounding this area, which honors some of the historic leaders of the Czechoslovak community. Plants were provided by the Gethsemane Garden Center.

Regarding another important BNC site, the Anton J. Cermak family mausoleum, our thanks go out to Irena

And finally, July 24, 2019, marked the 104th anniversary of the *Eastland* Disaster in the Chicago River. BNC is home to one of the most significant *Eastland* memorials, the *Eastland* Centennial Memorial in section 16, where numerous Eastland victims are buried. A new documentary, *Eastland: Chicago's Deadliest Day*, premiered on July 25th on Chicago's public television station, WTTW. It included scenes of the *Eastland* Memorial at BNC. Although there are no current plans to air the documentary outside the Chicago market, it will soon be available for purchase in DVD format (<https://eastlanddvd.com/>).

Chuck Michalek
Friends of BNC Volunteer

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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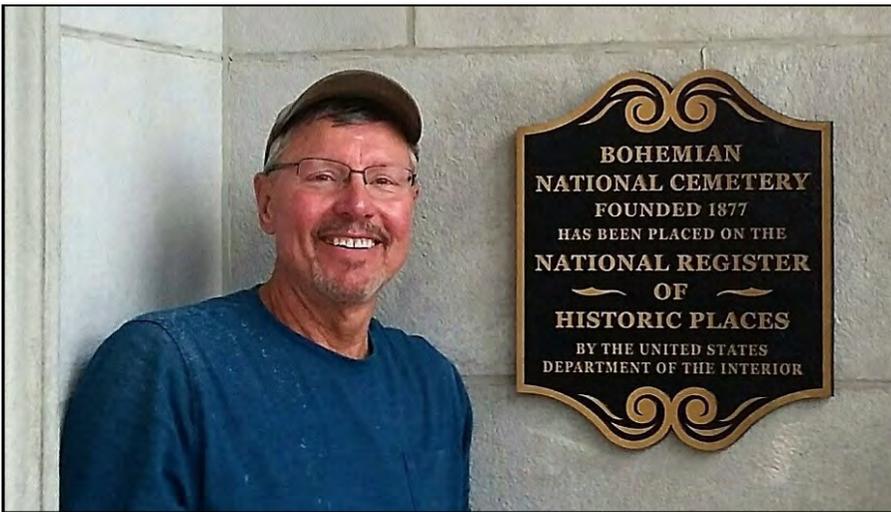
Heritage Happenings

we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery Summer Meeting Sunday, August 25th

“BNC Past and Present and Challenges for the Future”



Join us at our annual meeting for a slideshow presented by Chuck Michalek, long-time Friends of BNC volunteer and Bohemian National Cemetery Association board member and delegate. Chuck will discuss the cemetery's founding and early years, its growth and development through the decades, and its challenges for the future.

No reservations necessary.

1:30 pm, Sunday, August 25, 2019
Bohemian National Cemetery Office Building
5255 N. Pulaski Road, Chicago

Light refreshments
Air-conditioned
Handicapped-accessible