

# Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue ~ Vol. XVII No. 1

July 2020

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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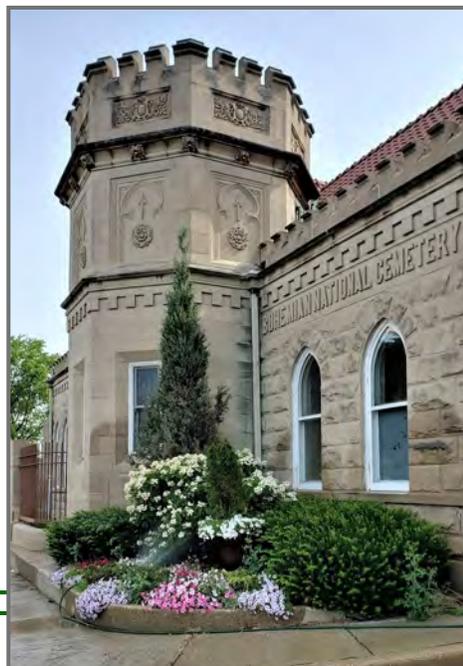
## What's New with Friends of BNC

Did you go to the cemetery with your parents or grandparents to put flowers on the graves? Or do you do that now? When I was about six or seven, my mom and grandmother and I went with flowers for my grandfather's and great-grandparents' graves. My entertainment as they planted and watered was looking at all those photos on the gravestones, especially the older ones with interesting costumes and the ones of children.

I didn't know then (in the 1940s) that most likely the photos had come

from the J.A. Dedouch Company, led by a Czech immigrant, Joseph Dedouch, who developed the process to print on enamel. Joseph is now at rest at BNC. On August 23, at 1:30 p.m., Rachel Berlinski, operations manager at the Oak Park River Forest Museum, will present "Lasting Images: The History of the J.A. Dedouch Company," a program with slides about the company and its interesting founder. It will be a virtual presentation, and on the back page of the newsletter, you will find out how you can tune in.

*(continued on page 3)*



## Live from BNC

The implementation of coronavirus pandemic safety precautions has necessitated mask-wearing and social distancing in the BNC office and during services in Ceremony Hall. Fortunately working outdoors minimizes risk to workers and allows weekly volunteers to continue cutting and removing fallen trees and branches and repositioning smaller monuments. Regular volunteers include Chuck Betzold, Bob Weniger, Bill Serviss, Carl Brader, Jim Miller and Chuck Michalek.

To assist with flower care and plant watering, Liz Vogel has recently joined the Wednesday volunteer crew. She has an extensive background in gardening and horticulture and is a most welcome addition to the BNC volunteers. With the assistance of the Gethsemane Garden Center, colorful flower plantings can now be seen at the gatehouse entrance, Klacel Circle, Cermak family mausoleum, the *Eastland* Disaster Memorial and other locations. The *Eastland*

*(continued on page 6)*

## 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](mailto:editor@friendsofbnc.org).

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### from the editor's laptop

If you have had a chance to look at our book about Bohemian National Cemetery, *A Dear and Precious Heritage* (available for purchase on our website), you know that there are a lot of memorial photographs adorning the grave markers at BNC.

I first noticed photographs on monuments when I went to Bohemian National Cemetery in search of the burial sites of my ancestors. For some of the relatives in our family tree, these memorial photos are the only images we have of them. I found the photo on the right on the Trnka monument at BNC. This is Tomáš Trnka, my third cousin 3 times removed (my great-great-great grandparents were his grandparents; my great-great grandmother and his mother were sisters). Tomáš was born in Sviny, southern Bohemia, in 1853 and immigrated to Chicago with his family in 1860, the first of my ancestors to immigrate. Have any of you found photos of your family on their grave markers? Let me know! ([editor@friendsofbnc.org](mailto:editor@friendsofbnc.org))



The major manufacturer of ceramic photos in the United States for more than a century was the Joseph A. Dedouch Company in Oak Park, and many of the photos at BNC were probably made by Dedouch's firm. The use of memorial photos on tombstones grew especially popular in the 1920s and 1930s, but there are earlier examples. The photo to the left is of Anna Hak. She died on July 18, 1897, and was buried two days later at BNC, so the photo possibly dates from that year, too. There is no signature on the front of the photo so we do not know who created it. Have you found any ceramic photos that might have been made before 1900?

Join us for a livestream presentation about the Dedouch company by Rachel Berlinski, operations manager at Oak Park River Forest Museum, on Sunday, August 23, at 1:30 pm CST. See back page for details or check our website.

Na shledanou  
carol jean smetana

# Děkuji Vám!

**Ray Malecek** for your excellent work as our vice president. We will miss you;

**Juli Nelson** for stepping up to serve as vice president;

**Chuck Betzold** for agreeing to serve as a director - welcome;

**Joe Topinka** and the **Judy Baar Topinka Charitable Foundation** for organizing and setting up Zoom for the Friends virtual board meetings;

**Joe Topinka** for arranging to have **Chuck Michalek** (thanks Chuck) give a virtual talk to the Riverside American Legion about BNC's veterans monuments;

**Chuck Michalek** for researching and writing our 2021 Czech government grant proposal; also for supervising work on the columbarium/crematorium building;

**Carol Jean Smetana** for setting up our new Square online store.

## What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)

Unfortunately, we didn't think we could social distance enough to meet in the office, our usual place for our summer meeting.

Holding our elections in this time of COVID-19 is also a challenge. We have a complete slate of officers proposed by the board. Normally we would vote in person in August, but again, it will be different in 2020. Enclosed is a ballot form with the names. Please send the paper ballot to this address: Friends of BNC, 5255

N. Pulaski Avenue, Chicago 60630. It needs to be postmarked by August 30, 2020.

It is my privilege to be nominated to serve another term as your president. When I look back at all we have achieved since our founding in 2004, it is gratifying! Thanks to the wonderful board members past and present and their willingness to give untold hours of their time! Thank you for letting me lead this amazing group.

We are losing Ray Malecek,

who will be stepping down due to health concerns, but we are happy to welcome Juli Nelson as our vice president. And we are delighted to welcome Chuck Betzold to fill the open director's spot. Thank you to all of them.

Stay well. We surely will miss our usual bakery items, coffee, conversation and meeting in person, but that virus is unfortunately alive and well!

**Marge Sladek Stueckemann**  
**President**



Left to right: Jim Miller, Bob Weniger, Carl Brader, Bill Serviss. All retirees. All in their 70s.

## Volunteers to the Rescue!

The Wednesday Volunteers were cutting down trees in section 23 when an older gentleman approached them. He was concerned that his work order to restore a fallen headstone had not yet been addressed. The cemetery staff is unusually busy during the pandemic, so the volunteers gladly stepped in to help. Here they are after they leveled the foundation and restored the monument stone to its upright position.

“One crooked stone down, a couple hundred to go.”

The volunteers all grew up within blocks of each other in the Ravenswood neighborhood of Chicago and have known each other since their grammar school days. Their passion for their work at the cemetery shows in its quality: they can take great pride in their volunteer maintenance of our cemetery's trees, roadways, monuments and buildings.

CSA Fraternal Life provided the t-shirts.

## Bohemian National Cemetery Hours

The cemetery office is open to the public  
**Monday-Friday 8:30 am to 4:00 pm;**  
**Saturday by appointment only.**  
Face masks are required.  
Only ten people in the office at a time.

The grounds are open  
**Monday-Sunday 7:30 am-4:00 pm.**

## Welcome to Our New Members!

**Michael Buchal family ... Waterford, MI**  
**Bradley Fisher ... Chicago IL**  
**Jan Kocek ... Palos Heights, IL**  
**Tom Lang ... Chicago IL**  
**Jeffrey Loss ... Oakton, VA**  
**Margie Trybus ... Oak Park, IL**

## Stories of the Stones: Joseph Albert Dedouch

by carol jean smetana

Have you noticed the memorial photos that adorn some headstones at Bohemian National Cemetery?

Memorial photos are not unique to Bohemian National Cemetery; in fact, they are not even unique to Chicago. You can find them in cemeteries throughout the country and around the world. But BNC does have a unique connection to the photos. Joseph Albert Dedouch, the Bohemian immigrant whose company is said to have produced more than a million

memorial photos in its 111-year history, is buried at the cemetery.

The biography of Joseph Dedouch is an immigrant success story. Ten years after four-year-old Joseph arrived in the United States with his family, he made his first enamel miniature photo. By the time he was 30, Joseph had his own company well on its way to becoming the premiere American manufacturer of memorial portraits for headstones. His photographs became so popular and widespread that his surname Dedouch became synonymous with the product: they were called "Dedos." At its peak, the J.A. Dedouch Company was producing 15,000 Dedos a month for customers not just in the United States, but in Canada, South America, Europe and Asia as well.

Joseph Dedouch was born on October 10, 1878, in Starý Pelhřimov, a village about 70

miles southeast of Prague. In March 1883, the family—his parents Josef Dědouch and Mary

has a mortgage on the three-flat and receives rent from the two other families living there. (Mary

would continue to live in the home with her unmarried children until her death in 1923.) Six children are living with Mary. (The twin Barbara had died, and the oldest daughter Katie is living with her husband Anton Dolezal in Pilsen.) Only the youngest child Edward, age 8, is attending school; all the other children are working.

Joseph's brother and sisters are employed as tailor/tailoresses.

But Joseph is on a different path: his occupation is listed as artist.

It is likely that Joseph, as was typical at the time, left school to start work when he entered his teens. Joseph himself suggested as much in a 1933 interview with a reporter from the Oak Park newspaper *Oak Leaves*. He said that his experiments with photographic



Jančík Dědouch, and their four children, Katie, age 11; Marie, 7; Joseph, 4; and John, 3—immigrated to the United States. They settled in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, where Josef and Mary had four more children: Anastazia in 1884, Agnes in 1885, and twins Edward and Barbara in 1890.

Josef Sr. died in October 1893, leaving Mary a widow with eight children.

Yet five years later, the Dedouch family joined the wave of upwardly mobile Bohemians moving west: Mary purchased a stone three-flat in Česká Kalifornie (North Lawndale) in 1898. According to the 1900 census, Mary

**THIS GUARANTEE GOES WITH EVERY DEDOUCH IMPERISHABLE PORTRAIT**



*This is to certify, that Picture No... Size... made by us, is guaranteed to be imperishable. We guarantee to replace same free of charge should it be affected by the sun, frost, rain, snow, or any chemical action that may be caused by atmospheric changes.*  
**Imperishable Miniature Co.**  
 Chicago,.....100 Per.....

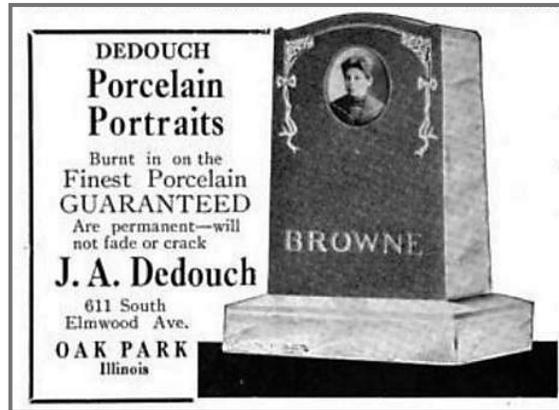
Made from any photograph or portrait; vitrified porcelain enamel, underglazed to make an absolutely imperishable portrait; guaranteed for all time; easily set in granite or marble, and not affected by weather or exposure. Ask for price list.

**Imperishable Miniature Co., 142-8 W. Madison St., Chicago**

materials and processes began when he was working as a portrait photographer in 1893 and continued five years later in his studio in Steinway Hall (an 11-story "skyscraper" in downtown Chicago). Early advertisements for his company started appearing in the first decade of the 20th century and claimed he had been making memorial portraits "for years." Eventually "Manufactured Since 1893" became part of the J.A. Dedouch Company hallmark.

City directories from the first decade of the twentieth century list Josef as an artist or photographer, with studios at various addresses. In February 1908 he incorporates the Imperishable Miniature Company for the "manufacturing and selling [of] pictures and frames." That same year, advertisements for the company appear in *The Monumental News*, a trade magazine for the monument industry, offering this description of the memorial photographs produced by the company:

"They are made by an underglazed photo-ceramic process, on copper which is dipped in vitrified enamel and subjected to a heat of about 1,400 degrees Fahrenheit. They are then glazed and are guaranteed to be absolutely imperishable, unaffected by exposure to any kind of weather conditions. They have, moreover, all the beauty of an art

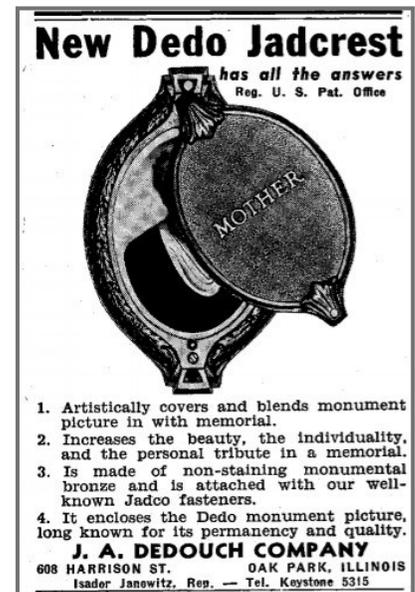


miniature showing all the gradations of light and shade and perfection of detail and outline that the best photographic process can produce. Mr. Josef Dedouch, the inventor of the process, has for years been making miniatures for artists and photographers by this same process and has furnished many of these everlasting portraits to monument dealers in Chicago and vicinity.

The Imperishable Miniature Company was located at 142-8 W. Madison in downtown Chicago. But this would be Joseph's last studio in the city. On June 2, 1908, Joseph married Rose Anna Kolacek, and the couple moved to 611 South Elmwood in Oak Park, which also became the new home for his company.

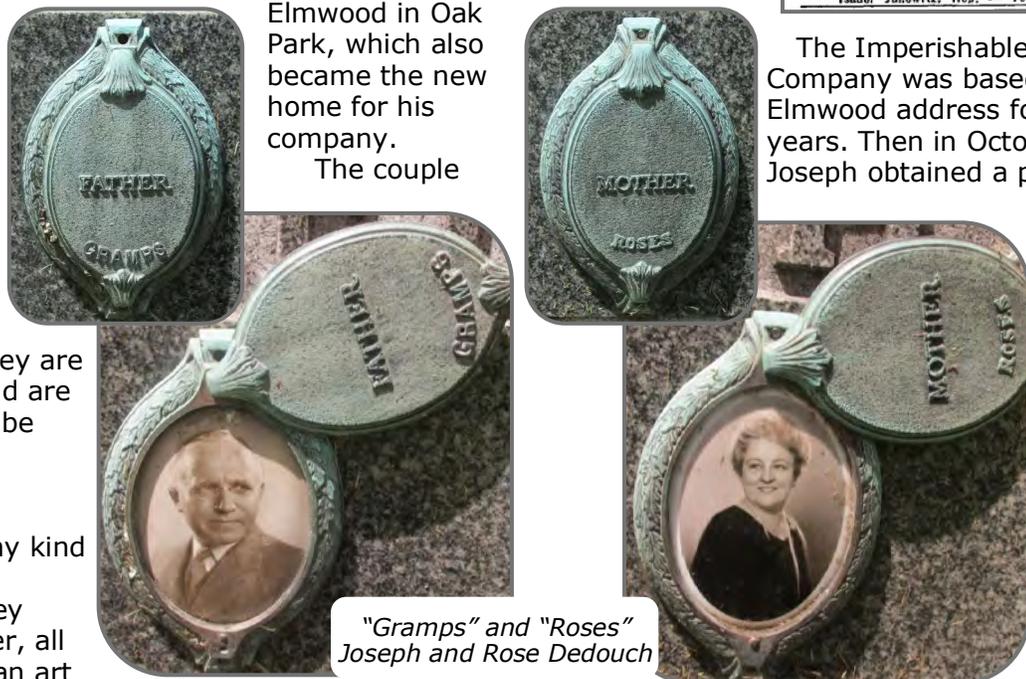
The couple

were active in the civic life of Oak Park. Joseph joined the Jackson Improvement Club, an organization devoted to the improvement of Oak Park, and in 1912 became its president. He helped found the Oak Park Community Chest. He was elected to the Parks Commission and in 1934 was elected a director of the Oak Park Chamber of Commerce. Rose was involved in several women's clubs, including the Betsy Ross Red Cross Auxiliary. Joseph and Rose had one child, a daughter Alice Rose, born in 1912.



The Imperishable Miniature Company was based at their Elmwood address for several years. Then in October 1925 Joseph obtained a permit to

build a "brick store" at 608-10 Harrison in Oak Park, and the business, now called the J. A. Dedouch Porcelain Photo Company, had a



(Continued on page 6)

## Columbarium Restoration Project Update

Despite the ongoing pandemic, workers from Marion Restoration, Inc., recently initiated the next phase of repairs at the exterior roof level of the columbarium building, in coordination with Knickerbocker Roofing Co. Both contractors are experts in assessing and repairing historic buildings. The current work involves masonry wall repairs and reconstruction of parapet walls connected to both the east and west sides of the bell tower.

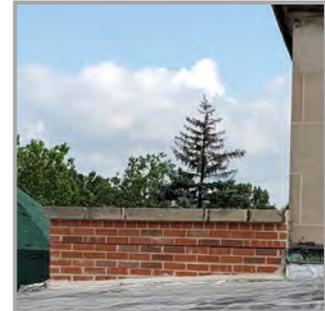
Working on older buildings



tower. The beams were sanded and coated with an epoxy seal prior to rebuilding the parapet walls.

Recent donors to the Columbarium Restoration Project can be assured the ongoing restoration is helping preserve this historic building for many future generations. Which for more updates in future newsletters.

often reveals superior, sturdy construction methods not often found in today's buildings. Such was the case when Marion's workers removed several layers of parapet wall bricks and uncovered large steel beams tied into a non-loadbearing small wall next to the bell



## Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

Disaster Memorial in section 16 continues to draw many visitors.

Friends of BNC has contacted Power Paving to repair several sections of cemetery roads. The work will be paid for by a Czech government grant, supplemented with funds from Friends of BNC.

**Chuck Michalek**  
**Friends of BNC Volunteer**  
**Wednesday Volunteer**



## Who are these masked men?



Regular readers of *Heritage Happenings* might recognize these two valued volunteers and Friends board members, who share a passion for the cemetery—and a first name!

## Stories of the Stones

(continued from page 5)

home of its own. In 1927 he added a garage and three years later expanded the studio space.

In September 1933, Alice Rose, after graduating from Northwestern University, married Wilford Tennyson Stannard, and he joined the family business in January 1934. Joseph also employed his nephew John Stola,

son of his younger sister Anastazia. After working for his uncle for several years, John formed Oak Park Ceramic Company in 1946.

Rose Dedouch died on December 26, 1938. Joseph Dedouch died on October 3, 1952, and was buried next to his wife at Bohemian National

Cemetery. The company passed down to his son-in-law Wilfred, and after Wilfred's death, to Richard Stannard, Wilfred's son and Joseph's grandson. The J. A. Dedouch Company was still producing upwards of 12,000 Dedos a year into the 21st century and only left family hands in 2004 when it was sold to a Canadian company.



## Donations

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### Thank You

#### (\$1—\$24)

Ken and Jan Klouzer  
 Patricia D. Salvino  
 James Starha family  
 Joseph E. Topinka

**Thank you all for your generosity.**

**Your donations help preserve and restore Bohemian National Cemetery.**

# *Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery*

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Email: [info@friendsofbnc.org](mailto:info@friendsofbnc.org)



## *Heritage Happenings*

we're on the web  
[www.friendsofbnc.org](http://www.friendsofbnc.org)



## *Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery*

invites you to our summer meeting **online** presentation



### *Lasting Images History of the J.A. Dedouch Company*

Joseph Dedouch, a Bohemian immigrant, developed the technique of printing photographs on porcelain. They proved quite popular and are seen on grave markers throughout BNC, including his.

Sunday, August 23, 2020, at 1:30 pm central time

To join our Zoom Meeting, go to [zoom.com](https://zoom.com), click on "Join a Meeting" and enter Meeting ID 819 8747 9588

Or go to: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81987479588>

Check our website for mobile phone options.



Presented by  
**Rachel Berlinski**  
Operations Manager  
Oak Park River Forest  
Museum