

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Fall Issue ~ Vol. XX No. 2

October 2023

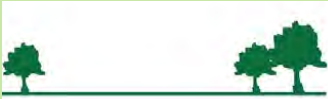
carol jean smetana, editor

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
New Members	2
Upcoming Events at BNC	3
Stories of the Stones - Government Headstones	4
Donations	6
World Wars I and II Restoration Update	7
Membership Renewal	8

What's New with Friends of BNC

Wanting to get back to tours which we did in spring and fall for many years before the pandemic, Friends of BNC board decided to have a tour, but we were only able to advertise it on our webpage and Facebook. October 29th was a cold and rainy day, so we wondered if people would come. About 15 people did come, including students visiting Chicago from Gymnázium Nad Alejí in Prague. These young people were here on an exchange with Chicago's Whitney M. Young Magnet High School, coordinated by the T.G. Masaryk Czech School in Cicero. Chuck Betzold and Chuck Michalek led the tour. Our visitors were quite impressed by the beautiful monuments and

buildings. Other tours of people from the Czech Republic have led to the participants trying to find their surnames on one of the headstones.

We hope to offer another tour of the cemetery in late April. Look for more details in the next issue of *Heritage Happenings*, as well as on our website and Facebook page. Cost will be \$20 for non-members and \$10 for members.

It is a joy to be able to show off our lovely cemetery again!

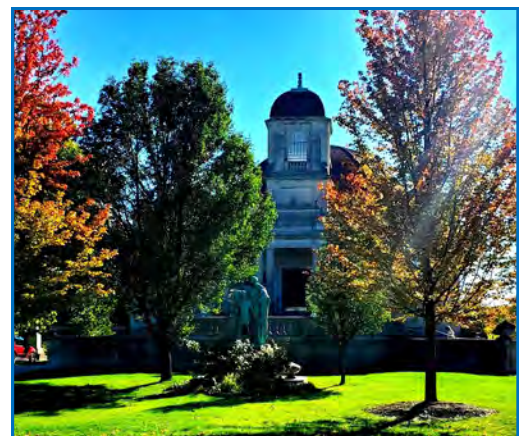
I hope you had a most Happy Thanksgiving and the very best for a special Sv. Mikulas day (December 6) and Merry Christmas!

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Live from BNC

Cool October weather brings autumn colors to the scenic grounds of Bohemian National Cemetery. Volunteers led by BNC Trustee and Friends of BNC member Chuck Betzold continue to trim and cut dead and fallen tree branches. Flowers and recently planted mums continue to showcase their colors under the helpful hand of volunteer Mary Lachiewicz.

After a long hiatus of BNC tours, Friends held its autumn Tour of the Tombstones on



October 29. The tour was led by Chuck Betzold with assistance from Chuck Michalek. Special attendees include teachers and high school students from Prague

(continued on page 3)

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, 511B 9th St, Las Vegas, NM 87701-3911 or emailed to her at editor@friendsofbnc.org.

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from the editor's laptop

Well, I apologize again for the tardiness of this issue. Research for the stone story was fascinating and led me down several rabbit holes! I'll try to get the next issue in your mailboxes by mid-February, only a couple weeks late.

Most of the information for this issue's Stories of the Stones came from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

website: <https://www.cem.va.gov/history/hmhist.asp>.

All the photos of government-furnished headstones were taken at Bohemian National Cemetery. Research on Ancestry.com, Fold3.com, and FamilySearch.org furnished additional details about the men and women whose graves are marked with government-furnished headstones, including Ancestry's database of "U.S. Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1861-1985" at <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2375/>.

If you have a deceased veteran or military service member in your family whose grave does not have a government-furnished headstone, you can apply for one now, no matter how long ago he or she passed away. Along with the upright and flat headstones pictured in the article, the government also will furnish bronze markers for niches and bronze veteran medallions in three sizes that can be affixed to private monuments.

You can find out more about eligibility and how to apply here:

<https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/headstones-markers-medallions/>

The application form, VA Form 40-1330: Claim for Standard Government Headstone or Marker, is available at:

<https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/va40-1330.pdf>. It includes illustrations of standard government headstones and markers, inscription information and the available emblems of belief. While there is no cost for the marker or for its shipping, the government does not pay the costs of installation of the marker in a private cemetery.

Most Friends of BNC memberships are expiring December 31, 2023. Please renew your membership using the coupon on the back page, or online at www.friendsofbnc.org. Email me (editor@friendsofbnc.org) if you're not sure if you need to renew—or if you would prefer to receive a digitized pdf copy of Heritage Happenings via email (it's in color and photos are much clearer!).

Please consider including Friends in your end-of-year giving plans to help further our preservation projects at Bohemian National Cemetery.

Šťastný nový rok
carol

Děkuji Vám!

Chuck Betzold and Chuck Michalek for leading our October 29 cemetery tour. They also gave the new Czech Consul General in Chicago, Jakub Utěšený, a tour after he met with the BNCA board recently.

Juli Nelson and Linda Burton for hosting our tour, helping serve

coffee, and selling our Dear and Precious books.

Joe Topinka and the Judy Baar Topinka Foundation for hosting our Zoom board meeting.

Dale Burton for driving 50 miles to get my signature on a form - and then another 50 miles home.

Welcome to Our New Members!

Sandra Brown and Family
Winfield, IL

Richard Prospal
Brunswick, OH



Live from BNC

(continued from page 1)
who were in Chicago for a Sister City exchange program with Whitney M. Young Magnet High School. Friends hopes to sponsor another tour in late April.



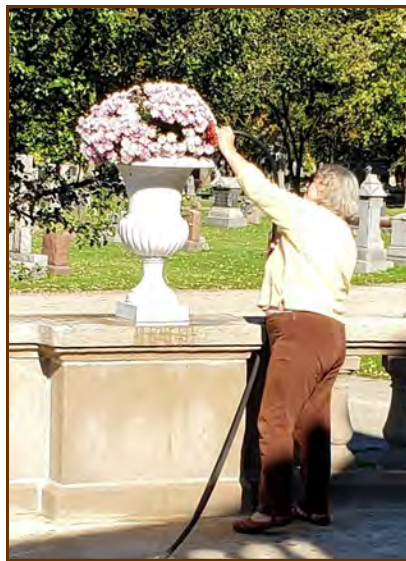
(left to right) Chuck Michalek, Consul General Jakub Utěšený, Chuck Betzold

The newly appointed Consul General of the Czech Republic in Chicago, Jakub Utěšený, visited the cemetery on November 1. Consul General Utěšený met with the BNCA Board led by BNCA President David Pimm.

Following his meeting with the board, Mr. Utěšený was given a tour of the cemetery. Highlights included his viewing the Cermak Family Mausoleum, Eastland Memorial, Masaryk Mausoleum and the inside of the crematorium-



Fall Tour of the Tombstones



Volunteer Mary Lachiewicz

columbarium building. The cemetery board and Friends of BNC expressed appreciation to Consul General Utěšený for our ongoing relationship with the Czech Consulate General in Chicago and the grants Friends of BNC has received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Chuck Michalek
Friends of BNC Volunteer
Wednesday Volunteer

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery



Winter office hours:
8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. weekdays;
Closed Saturday and Sundays.

Cemetery Grounds are open from
7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m daily.

Next Tour of the Tombstones
will be in late April

Stories of the Stones: Government-Furnished Headstones

by carol jean smetana

Today, graves of military service members who died on active duty, as well as those of veterans, can often be identified at Bohemian National Cemetery by their government-furnished headstones. In the early decades of the United States, wooden headboards with slightly curved tops were used to mark graves of soldiers buried at military outposts, but there was no protocol for registering these burials.

The outbreak of the Civil War and its quickly mounting casualties prompted the federal government to establish a centralized system in September 1861. Burials of fallen soldiers were recorded on standardized forms, and to mark their graves the government supplied curved-top wooden boards, to be painted white with black lettering. The next year Congress established national cemeteries as the final resting places for Union soldiers.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, with more than 400,000 graves in national cemeteries needing to be maintained in perpetuity, wooden markers became impractical: they tended to deteriorate after just five years of exposure to the elements. As a result, the War Department approved a design in 1873 for permanent government headstones for use in national cemeteries.

But not all soldiers were buried in national cemeteries, and in 1879, Union soldiers buried in non-federal cemeteries, such as BNC,

became eligible for these government-furnished headstones. Known as the "Civil War" marker and intended to project 12 inches above the ground, it is a slab of marble or granite, 4 inches thick and 10 inches wide, with a slightly rounded top reminiscent of its wooden predecessor. The design features raised letters enclosed in a recessed shield. Later it would also be used for the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, the Mexican War, Indian Campaigns, and the Spanish-American War.



A Civil War stone at BNC—Early stones listed only the name, unit, and branch of service: Frank Smola - Company F - 24th Illinois Infantry. Smola, born in Bohemia c. 1844 and died in Chicago in 1903, served three years in the Union army.

After World War I, the government extended its program for headstones at private cemeteries to include members of the armed forces who died on active duty in wars other than the Civil War, as well as for veterans of those wars. In 1922 a new headstone design was adopted for those who served in



"Sp. Am. War" was approved for use on the Civil War style stones at the end of the Spanish-American War to differentiate those veterans. Captain Frank E. Waska died in 1925.

the twentieth century. Called the "General" because three U.S. Army generals formed the board that selected the design, the headstone was a slab of American white marble, 13 inches wide, 4 inches thick, and 42 inches long. Still slightly rounded at the top, the inscription on the front included name, home state, rank, military unit, and date of death. New to this design, the family could choose a religious symbol of either a Christian Latin Cross or a Jewish Star of David. Today there are 79 approved

This Civil War headstone for John Fishman, who died in 1915, identifies his unit and branch of service - Company F in the 5th U.S. Infantry. Fishman, who was born in Bohemia in 1848, died July 22, 1915, in Chicago. He served from 1874 to 1887 and was a veteran of the Indian Wars.





An early General headstone—Charles Erhardt - Illinois [but German-born]-Private - 14th Infantry - [died] December 24, 1919. Despite his death date, Erhardt was not a World War I casualty; he served from 1903 to 1906.

The unauthorized photo added (probably by the family) to Ladislav Cap's General headstone is a telltale clue to his era of service. Bohemian-born Cap emigrated in 1909 and eight years later was a private in the 12th Infantry, 8th Division, during WWI. He died on December 17, 1940.



inches wide by 12 inches high and 4 inches thick, with incised inscriptions. But because marble is a soft

stone that can easily weather to the point that inscriptions become illegible, some private cemeteries prohibited markers made of marble. In 1939 a flat granite marker was authorized, followed in 1940 with a bronze option with raised lettering. Similarly, General upright stones of



granite were available from 1940—1947 and again starting in 1994. Today inscriptions on both flat and upright General headstones must include name, branch of service, and birth and death years. Optional items include rank, war service, and emblems of belief.



The General-style stone of Juan Barrero records his place of birth.



The more modern General headstones of James Hydanek and Jerry J. Chlada—In 1944 dates of birth were approved for government headstone. In 1946 the inclusion of "World War I" or "World War II" was authorized.

emblems of belief, including symbols for Moravian Brethren Church, Wicca, and atheist, as well as a sandhill crane for "being one with land, water and sky."

In the early twentieth century, private cemeteries increasingly adopted the "lawn cemetery" design and required markers to be small and often flush with the ground to make maintenance (lawn mowing) easier and more efficient. To meet this condition, in 1936 the government approved flat markers made of marble, 24



Sgt. Robert Mervicker served in World War II and Korea and was killed in action Sept. 1, 1950. The initials after "Korea" indicate he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal (BSM) and a Purple Heart (PH).



In 1973 the bronze flat marker design was updated to include a decorative beveled edge. Frank Novotny served in World War II.



"Vietnam" was approved for use in 1964. The emblem of belief on Fusick's flat granite headstone is the Lutheran Cross.



In 1997, the addition of "inclusive inscriptions" like the last two lines on Sgt. Skaritka, Jr's stone, was approved.

Donations

Benefactors

(\$1000—\$9999)

Robert & Lucy Chleboun *in honor of* All Those Who Served
 Robert A. Kubicka *in memory of* Claire H. Smith
 Charles Michalek
 Julie Nelson and Jim Nelson *in memory of* James Andrs & Clarence Nelson (WWI) and Charles Nelson Jr (WWII)
 Marge & Dave Stueckemann *in memory of* Evelyn Fergle

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 Meribeth and John Tooke *in memory of* Rudolph Bohumil Kovar (WWI veteran) and Gary Fisher (Vietnam War veteran)

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 CSA Lodge DuPage Pioneers/Edison #409
 CSA Lodge Harrison Hus Garfield #378 *in memory of* Our Lodge Veterans
 CSA Lodge Mile-Hi Czechs #432 (Lakewood, CO)
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 Lori-Jo A Fergle *in honor of* The Fergle Family
 Mary Ellen Flaks
 Richard & Kathy Gray *in honor of* Vlasta Stehno Podlizec
 Howard Habenicht
 Joseph and Lillian Hahn *in memory of* Joseph's grandparents
 Jim and Elaine Hajek
 Carol Hajek
 Ron Hejna *in memory of* Hejna, Blizek, & Prihoda veterans
 Joanne Herber
 William Hudecek *in memory of my father* William Hudecek, WWI veteran
 Mary Janda *in memory of* John Nawracaj, WWII
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 James Laska
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 Pamela Morong *in memory of* Vaclav and Anna Fryml, James & Rose Fryml
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 Gladys Wheeler *in memory of* James and Marie Dus

Donors

(\$25—\$99)

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 Roger Liska
 Loretta Paulus *in memory of* Edward Srouvy
 Henrietta Pons
 Bess & Charles Prazak
 Jacqueline Rock *in memory of* Zlober/Mrkvicka
 Laddie and Janice Polz *in memory of* Blanche and Otto Polacek
 Delphine Schaefer *in honor of* All World War I & II Veterans
 Sonia Skubal *in memory of* Lili Skubal
 Jerry and Mary Souta, Jr. *in memory of* The Hruska and Souta Families
 Richard Sykora
 Sylvia L. Sykora *in memory of* Anton and Josefa Sykora
 Jeff Tucek's Dive Club
 Grace Vavrina *in memory of* Walter Joseph Vavrina
 Rowlene Wendoll *in honor of* Chester Wendoll
 Robert Weniger *in memory of* Rudy and Marie Betzold
 Jason and Leslie Wright

Thank You

(\$1—\$24)

Nada Dobias
 Arlene Gaidas
 Joan Musil

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



World Wars I and II Memorial Restoration Project Update Unexpected Repairs and Need for Donations

Have you ever started a project thinking a simple repair is needed, only to



discover you've just touched the surface of what's needed? In our last newsletter, we reported that the engraved sandstone panels on the World Wars I and II Memorial were removed in order to assess the monument's interior core that supports the 40-foot flagpole.

Behind the panels, a severely deteriorated brick substrate was discovered and disassembled. After removing the deteriorated bricks, a major circumference crack in the concrete core was revealed that potentially challenged the monument's structural integrity. To better evaluate the situation, the contractor utilized a concrete scanning instrument to gauge the extent of the crack and determine a course of action. Several strategies were discussed, including the total removal and

replacement of the concrete core, which was deemed cost-prohibitive. Instead, the use of a high-tech epoxy injection system was decided upon, with application of several protective membrane coatings applied to the concrete core.



As of this writing, the epoxy injection, membrane application, rebuilding of the brick substrate, and base foundation have been completed. The last major step involves replacement of the engraved sandstone panels. We are hoping all the necessary work will be completed before Chicago's



winter weather arrives.

As a result of the deterioration of the monument's core, cost for repairs escalated from \$30,000 to over \$70,000. Surviving veterans are alarmed at how few remember the sacrifice made by men and women

who served our country. Friends of BNC is committed to maintaining BNC's war memorials to help preserve the memory of our service

personnel. Many of our



Friends of BNC members have already contributed to this effort, but we ask again to please donate so that we can continue to keep alive the spirit and memory those who served.

Chuck Michalek
Project Coordinator

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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Chicago IL 60630-1701

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Email: info@friendsofbnc.org
Website: www.friendsofbnc.org



Heritage Happenings October 2023

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

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. 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 or those already renewed after September this year, will expire December 31, 2023.** New members joining in the last quarter of a year (Oct.-Dec.) receive those 3 months as a bonus, and their membership year begins the following January.

Please send in your renewal now! Or save a stamp and renew on our secure website <https://friendsofbnc.org>.

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 credit card information
to:

**Friends of Bohemian National
Cemetery—Membership**
5255 N Pulaski Rd
Chicago IL 60630-1775

Friends of BNC is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit public charity. To make a tax-deductible donation to fund improvements at BNC, please write a separate check with a notation on the memo line. Thank you.

Membership Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code (+ 4) _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Type of Membership _____

For credit card payment (Visa, Master Card, Discover, American Express), include:

Card number _____ Expiration date _____

Security code _____ Signature _____