

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Winter Issue ~ Vol. XVII No. 3

January 2021

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

Do you come to the cemetery from the south, turning onto Pulaski at the corner by Foster? If so, you drive by the white wall, just south of the office on the east side of the road. If you have taken the time to look at it at all, you will agree it is definitely in need of some care!

Although you might think this wall is just to restrain the area to the east, actually it had a different purpose before 1989. It was the lower level of the large greenhouse where many men in the gardening division grew plants for people to purchase to decorate the graves in spring, as was the custom of people from the late 1800s to about mid-

century 1900s. As the years passed, however, this custom diminished, partly because many families moved away, and it just wasn't what people did. Finally it was more economical to buy plants from commercial garden centers and not at the cemetery itself. The wall on Pulaski is all that is left of the last greenhouse, which was demolished in 1989,

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Live from BNC

The Covid19 pandemic and resulting social distancing requirements necessitated cancellation of numerous cemetery activities during 2020. Traditional gatherings canceled included the Memorial Day and Mother's Day ceremonies, CSA Fraternal Life Join Hands Day, and Friends of BNC tours. We are hoping 2021 will bring opportunities to resume these activities.

As a result of a grant from the Czech Republic in 2020, along with funds from Friends of BNC and private donations, a second round of repairs was made to large

potholes in the roads. As most know, Chicago weather causes havoc on many roads in the area, and road repairs remain a constant issue.

The Wednesday Volunteers continued cutting fallen trees and branches until the cold weather set in. During 2020, the volunteers cut down 22 dead trees

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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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Juli Nelson

Projects: Chuck Michalek

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from the editor's laptop



I enjoyed researching this quarter's stone story, even though there was information I couldn't find, e.g., any records of Mucek/Albieri on ships, any record of what happened to his wife Mary after Pavel's death. The cemetery's 25th anniversary book and relevant lot cards provided details for the cemetery information. Most of the

other information came from online digitizations of Bohemian newspapers from the turn of the last century, published either in Prague or the United States. I recently discovered a trove of them available on the website of the National Museum in Prague (kramerius.nm.cz) and at the Czech digital library (digitalniknihovna.cz). Especially useful were 1901 articles about Albieri's death and funeral from "Národní listy" (Prague), "Pokrop zapadu" (Omaha), and "Kočety americké" (Omaha). The photo of Albieri is from the 1903 "Amerikán kalendář" (Chicago). Among his writings are a two-part article he wrote for "Národní listy" about the 1893 Chicago world's fair and an article called "Český živel v chicagu" ("The Czech Element in Chicago") for the 1900 Chicago Czech business directory. Of course, Google Translate helped bridge the huge gap in my Czech vocabulary!

I hope many of you will be able to join us on the last Sunday of February for Chuck Michalek's presentation on the tributes to soldiers and veterans at BNC. If you're not able to watch live, the presentation will be available later for replay on our website and Facebook page.

Na shledanou
carol

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

Cemetery grounds are open
7:30 am to 4:00 pm
seven days a week.

Cemetery office is open
8:30 am to 3:00 pm
Monday through Friday.

By appointment only
on Saturday and Sunday.

Masks required; only two people at counter at a time.

Welcome to Our New Members!

Elaine Collina ... Chicago IL

Emily Polacek ... Brookfield IL

Ellen Pomes ... Chicago IL

Matouš Ptáček ... Chicago IL

Mary Sims ... Lyons IL

Jane Tuma ... Chicago IL

Robert Weniger ... Hanover Park IL



How to Join Friends Winter Meeting

You can watch Chuck Michalek’s presentation “Bohemian National Cemetery Honors our Soldiers and Veterans” live on Facebook or by joining our Zoom meeting.

When: Sunday, February 28, 2021

Time: 1:30 pm central time

On Facebook: Go to Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Bohemian-National-Cemetery-181958125204936>

Via Zoom:

<https://zoom.us/join> **Meeting ID:** 871 9127 6312 **Passcode:** 892775
or
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87191276312?pwd=ZUhLOVg1L3ZPVHoxT1VWSWo2TmFNZz09>

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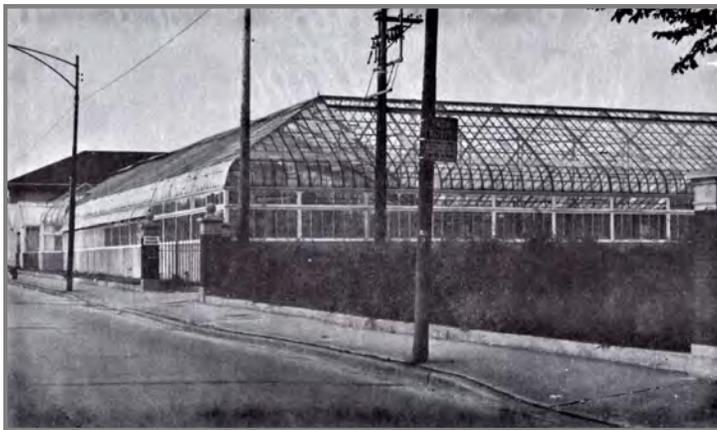
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Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/k83L2cXtc>

What’s New with Friends of BNC



Greenhouses on east side of Pulaski Road looking north



The remaining greenhouse foundation wall today

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leaving behind that white wall.
Each year since Friends of BNC began in 2004, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs has given us a grant to enhance the cemetery. For 2021, we

requested grant money, which Friends will match from our treasury, to repair and restore the wall, which really is pretty unsightly! That work will take place this summer sometime. It would surely be wonderful if

you could drive by this wall looking so much better when you come to the cemetery later in the summer!

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Stories of the Stones: Pavel Albieri

by carol jean smetana

Inscribing a name on a gravestone is a way to ensure that a person will not be forgotten. This is the story of a man buried at Bohemian National Cemetery with no stone marking his grave—even though he has an entry in Czech Wikipedia of more than 1000 words; even though Czech-language journals here and in Bohemia reported at length on his death in 1901; and even though the Society of Bohemian Journalists in America petitioned the governing board of the Bohemian National Cemetery Association to grant him burial in a place of honor in Klacel Circle.

No stone, but there is a story.

Jan Mucek was a Bohemian-American writer, journalist, poet and photographer who used the pen name Pavel Albieri. He was born August 1, 1861, in Jaroměř, Bohemia, a town about 80 miles east-northeast of Prague. When Mucek started writing in the late 1870s, he created a pen name from the main river flowing through Jaroměř, the Labe (Elbe): to the stem *Albis*, the Latin name for the river Labe, he attached *-ieri*, an Italian surname suffix.

In the 1880s Albieri



published several short story collections about military life, and from 1884 to 1889 he published and edited a regional weekly magazine that was praised for its quality and varied content. His 1885 marriage to fellow writer Pavla Moudrá broke up two years later, after the death of their one-year-old son.

In early 1890 Albieri made his first trip to the United States and immediately applied for U.S. citizenship. He lived in Cleveland, St. Paul and Chicago while writing articles and stories and working as an editor for several different newspapers and magazines, including August Geringer's Chicago-based newspaper *Svornost*.

In early 1894 Albieri returned to Bohemia, but sometime between 1895 and 1898 he went back to the United States. He started up his own magazine, publishing it over the course of several months as he moved from New York to Chicago to Milwaukee. In Milwaukee he married Mary Jaeger (18-1/2 years his junior) on September 8, 1898. They moved to Cleveland where Albieri worked as an editor on yet another newspaper. But after several months of disagreements with his partner, Albieri quit the

newspaper and returned to Chicago with Mary. He became a naturalized citizen on December 17, 1899.

During these peripatetic years, Albieri continued to write. His articles, travelogues and fiction, published in Prague newspapers throughout the 1890s, provided Czech readers with views of life in America. One of his novels, *Nevěsta za padesát dolarů* (*A Bride for Fifty Dollars*), published in Prague in 1897, tells the story of Bohemian immigrants in Chicago, climaxing at the annual picnic at Bohemian National Cemetery. Although his literary efforts never received great critical acclaim, his writings had popular appeal both in the United States and in Bohemia.

When he settled in Chicago in 1899, Albieri took a job as sales manager and advertising agent with the Josef Triner Company, manufacturer of bitter wines and elixirs. In early October 1901, Albieri traveled to Texas for a 3-week trip. He met members of the large Texas Czech community with the intention of writing about its history. On October 21, returning from the San Antonio International Fair, Albieri's train pulled into Smithville Station at 1 a.m. for a half-hour stop. After dining at the station restaurant, Albieri noticed the train beginning to move. He

managed to jump onto the nearest car but learned from the onboard brakeman that that car was actually being separated from the main train and would remain behind in Smithville. Leaping from the rolling car to the platform, Albieri lost his balance and fell under the wheels of the moving train, dying instantly.

His employer Josef Triner paid for his body to be transported back to Chicago. Plzeňský Sokol Hall was filled with mourners for Albieri's funeral on October 25th, his casket overwhelmed by bouquets, wreaths, and floral arrangements. František Zdrůbek, co-founder of Bohemian National Cemetery, gave a eulogy.

The funeral procession then went to Bohemian National Cemetery where, after another service in Ceremony Hall, Albieri was buried in a grave in Josef Triner's family lot.

Perhaps there is no marker for Pavel Albieri because his first burial site was thought to be temporary. At their monthly meeting on November 6, 1901, twelve days after Albieri's funeral, the Bohemian National Cemetery Association board discussed a letter from the Society of Bohemian Journalists in America, requesting that Albieri be honored with burial in Klacel Circle. A long, heated discussion ensued. News reports described board members questioning Albieri's writing talent, demeaning

him as a mere salesman hawking Triner's bitter wine, and wondering what he had done for the cemetery. The board postponed a decision "indefinitely." Bohemian-American papers published incensed editorials berating the board for refusing to grant Albieri a place of honor, calling it an insult to Czech writers and journalists. But the Society of Bohemian Journalists eventually withdrew their request.

Was a marker then provided for Albieri's grave in the Triner lot, perhaps purchased by the Society of Bohemian Journalists or by Josef Triner himself? No marker exists today—and the body of Pavel Albieri is no longer there.

Josef Triner died in 1918, and the next year the family built a mausoleum in a different section of the cemetery. The bodies in the old lot were reburied in the new family lot with the Triner mausoleum—all of them except Albieri's. The old lot was sold to an unrelated family in 1920—with Albieri still there.

But in 1959, seemingly out of the blue, Albieri's remains were disinterred from the former Triner lot and reburied in a lot containing the remains of Vaclav and Johana Zetek. The Zeteks had died and been buried there almost fifty years prior, Vaclav in 1910, Johana in 1914. Both Zetek graves have

markers. But still there is no marker for Pavel Albieri.

Why was Albieri reburied, and why there? The only clue I found is that Johana Zetek's maiden name was Wecker (Vecker); her father John purchased the lot soon after his wife Katerina died in 1909. She was buried there, as was John himself when he died later in 1910. But John and Katerina Wecker are no longer there. Their other daughter was Katherine Wecker—Josef Triner's wife. It was likely Katherine Wecker Triner who had John and Katerina Wecker reburied in the new Triner lot in 1920.

Sometimes we genealogists and family historians are surprised and disappointed when we visit a cemetery in search of an ancestor's burial place, only to discover there is no gravestone commemorating the deceased. Friends president Marge Stueckemann wrote about her experience at BNC: "The cemetery family plot card showed the area where my great-grandparents Petronilla and Jan Sladek were buried, but there was no stone. That seemed strange because Jan Sladek was a master tailor, and one of his sons, my grandfather, had enough money to buy a new two-flat around 1905 and the other son was a physician—so not a really poor family." After confirming with the cemetery that it was allowed, Marge purchased a stone to place on her great-grandparents' graves for posterity.



Donations

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*Thank you all for your
generosity.*

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

Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

and helped remove a large number of dead tree trunks. Thanks to funds from Friends of BNC and a donation from CSA Lodge DuPage Pioneers, a new chain saw was purchased to help with tree cutting. Volunteers include Chuck Betzold, Jim Miller, Bill Servis, Liz Vogel, Carl Brader, Bob Weniger and Chuck Michalek. In addition, Chuck Betzold conducted an extensive tree survey at the end of 2020 that revealed a considerable number of dead and diseased trees still requiring attention. However over 800 healthy trees



remain to help provide BNC's pastoral and natural landscape.



Chuck Michalek
Friends of BNC Volunteer
Wednesday Volunteer



Columbarium Restoration Project Update

2020 concluded another successful year of restorations to BNC's crematorium/columbarium building, thanks



to donations from Friends of BNC members and supporters. As reported in previous newsletters, important repairs were made to several rooftop masonry walls, including reconstruction of parapet walls connecting to the northside bell tower.

The second main project completed in October 2020 involved installation of a new roof to the area directly over the columbarium's entrance hallway. Several layers were installed including a DensDeck Prime roof board followed by a Firestone BaseGuard Coating. On top was applied Firestone Ultrawhite 180 APP modified roof membrane over base ply, which is a white membrane meeting City of Chicago's energy code requirements for roof reflectivity. Repairs were also made to small roof and drainage components at the

south section of the building.

It should be noted that contractors are selected on the basis of their experience with historic buildings and their use of high quality materials and workmanship to ensure restoration befitting BNC's historic crematorium/columbarium building.

The Columbarium Restoration Project Donor Wall continues to attract donors and provide opportunities to recognize generous donors or honor loved ones. This past

The two named individuals were daughters of members of Svobodná Obec, a longtime Freethinker Czech organization, an integral part of the cemetery's history, that Wayne's family has been active in for many years.

Thank you to the many donors that make this ongoing restoration and other BNC projects possible.

Chuck Michalek
Friends of BNC Projects
Chair



December new plates were added.

Friends member Wayne Wolf, a longtime supporter of Friends of BNC and delegate to BNCA, recently chose to honor several victims of the 1915 *Eastland* disaster with a generous donation.



Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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Heritage Happenings

we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



Friends of BNC Winter Meeting

Bohemian National Cemetery Honors Our Soldiers and Veterans

Throughout the historic grounds of BNC are numerous solemn and poignant monuments in recognition of our country's major military campaigns, as well as individual military grave markers. **Chuck Michalek**, Friends of BNC Projects Chair and BNCA Trustee, will highlight some of the many military representations at BNC. His illustrated talk will include a look at BNC's long tradition of celebrating Memorial Day and rare film footage of the 1952 dedication of the World Wars I and II Memorial.

Online at 1:30 pm, Sunday, February 28, 2021

Join us on Facebook live by going to Friends Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Bohemian-National-Cemetery-181958125204936/>

or via Zoom:

Meeting ID: 871 9127 6312

Passcode: 892775

(see page 3 for additional connection details).

