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Editor

Heritage Happenings: Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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

What's New with FOBNC By Marge Sladek Stueckemann, Chairperson

Did you know one of our monuments has a squirrel? It was just one of the new things we saw at the September 19th tour. Albert Walavich did a superb job, as he led a group of 38 people on a tour that highlighted a different area of the cemetery from those toured before. We then enjoyed refreshments in our historic gatehouse. Our thanks to Ray Capek for an excellent job with reservations.

The elegant chapel and intricate designs gracing the Columbaria were a big hit during our November 20th tour. Following Albert's main presentation in the chapel to a group of 58 people, the docents led three smaller groups to explore the side aisles and entryway niches. Thanks to docents Ken Dvorsky, Colleen and Randy Kadlec, and Chris Repa Visconti for their knowledge and help, and to Mary Syrup, whose job as reservation chair made the day go smoothly! The delicious refreshments and lovely table were thanks to Martha and Chuck Cervenka. To Albert Walavich, again, go our utmost thanks for another job well done. And a big thanks goes out to the docent trainees. Our docents not only came for training on November 7th, but also distributed flags provided by BNC placing them on veteran's graves and around the veteran monuments to commemorate Veterans Day on November 11th.

Tax exempt status is on the way! Thanks to the work of our member and BNC attorney, Joe Vosicky, the papers have been filed with the state for FoBNC.

Mr. Ivo Broskevic from the Czech Embassy is the contact for a grant proposal made by Joe Vosicky to receive funds for starting the Friends of BNC organization. We have filed the first report to obtain these funds. It's exciting to be discussing our cemetery with our mother country!

Check out our new sets of note cards with beautiful Czech designs or historic views of the BNC buildings. (See cover sheet for prices) Thanks to Lillian Picha for the designs and to Juli Nelson for getting them printed.

Come see and hear our cemetery's most famous Civil War soldier come to life. Dan McCarthy, a re-enactor will come dressed as Union soldier, Frantisek Steiskal. Join us for our next program on Sunday, February 27, 2005 at 2:00 pm at the Westchester Library. (See cover sheet for directions.)

It has been wonderful to work with so many people who care about BNC and are most willing to put in the time to see our group thrive! Thank you for the privilege! Email fobnc@yahoo.com or call 847-362-9036.

Family History at BNC

Bohemian National Cemetery Chapel and Columbarium Interior

Decorations of John A. Mallin

By Katherine Mallin

My grandfather, John Anton Mallin (nee Johann Anton Malinkovic) was a church decorator and artist who did the artistic decoration for the upper and lower chapels, lobby and hallways of the Bohemian National Cemetery Crematory-Columbarium building. He was born on April 14, 1883, in Hlohovec, in southern Moravia (near Breclav), to Johann Malinkovic and Barbara Drobilic. In 1898, when he was 15 years old, he went to Vienna where he became a student in the School of the Interior and Decorative Painters Guild. He came to Chicago in January of 1907.

In his lifetime he decorated over a hundred churches in the Chicago area. Some of the churches include St. Procopius, St. John of God, St. Mary of the Angels, St. Hyacinth, St. Hedwig, and St. Vincent DePaul. He also decorated the residences of John Cuneo, a wealthy businessman, whose mansion in Vernon Hills is now a museum. The chapel, dining room, and ballroom still include his original decorations. When my grandfather died in 1973, his service was at the BNC chapel. I cannot forget the image of the coffin rising from the basement to the chapel that he decorated.

In doing research about my grandfather's life and work, I came across the book "The Centennial of the Bohemian National Cemetery Association of Chicago, Illinois", published in 1977. It includes information about the construction and contracts awarded for the building and decoration of the Crematorium. "The first contract was awarded to him for artistic decoration of the main Chapel for a sum of \$3,000. In addition, contracts for the painting of the lobby of the crematory, the organ room, the front and rear stairwells and the two entrance lobbies was awarded to him. The dedication of the newly decorated

crematory and organ room was held on January 26, 1919. In October 1928, a contract was awarded to J.A. Mallin for redecoration of the Main Chapel for the sum of \$7,500 with gold leaf to be used instead of gold paint. When this work was completed in February of 1929, Mr. Mallin was commissioned to redecorate the lower chapel". One of my grandfather's specialties was the use of gold leaf, so it is not surprising that they would have asked him to redecorate the chapel in this manner. In February of 1945, the upper and lower chapels were cleaned and decorated by a Rudolph Kaplan. I don't think that my grandfather's decorations were replaced as the current chapel still has his original decorations. In 1945, John A. Mallin was commissioned to repair and retouch water damage to artwork in the upper portion of the crematorium lobby. In July of 1946 bids were solicited for construction of a new upper Hallway Columbarium, and John A. Mallin was awarded the contract. After the construction was completed, he was awarded another contract for decorating the Main Chapel and the Lower Chapel.

I have two original photos of the Upper Chapel showing his decorations. There is no date on the photos, but I am fairly certain they were taken before the redecoration done in 1946 and possibly before the gold leaf was added in 1928.

I have an undated brochure that he used to advertise his business, which includes one of the chapel photos as well as a description of the chapel decoration. "Decoration of the dome has been done in light shades of colors. The moldings, cornices and capitals are glazed in ivory with a touch of gold. The frieze in center of the dome has been painted in Italian Renaissance and the beams are marbled." The brochure mentions his 26 years of training, both in the U.S. and abroad, and the fact that he had been specializing in church decorating for the past ten years. ■

Katherine Mallin will do a presentation about her grandfather at our summer meeting in August 2005.

Do you have a family history story to share? We would love to hear it. Please mail your story to Chris Repa Visconti, Editor, 550 Alcoa Lane Hoffman Estates, IL 60194 or email to: Dagochek@aol.com ■

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Tour September 19, 2004

The September 19th tour of Bohemian National Cemetery began at the Gatehouse, in a beautiful waiting room done in the Arts and Crafts Style. In front of the massive fireplace we set up a lovely table of coffee, oplatky, donuts and fresh pastry to fortify ourselves before the tour. Everyone mingled and chatted in anticipation. We had a group of 38 people, 23 members and 15 non-members. We also gained five new members that day.

Ray Capek gave a beautiful introduction, welcoming all of the attendees and set the stage for our tour leader to enlighten us. With a thank you to all of those involved in setting up the tour, he turned it over to Albert Walavich. We spent close to 2 hours walking the cemetery grounds, admiring the wealth of statues, monuments and memorials. We were grateful for the nice weather and another opportunity to spend time learning about BNC from such a knowledgeable source as Albert Walavich. ■

Sinking of the Eastland

Just in time for the holiday gift giving, EDHS the *Eastland Disaster Historical Society*, announces the release of the new book. The Sinking of the Eastland, America's Forgotten Tragedy, written by Jay Bonansinga.

"On July 24, 1915, the city of Chicago suffered a tragedy that was witnessed by nearly 10,000 bystanders and claimed more lives than the infamous Chicago Fire. Taking place in broad daylight on the city's bustling wharf side, it was a heartbreaking maritime disaster that sorrowfully echoed the sinking of the luxury liner *Titanic* just three years earlier. And the only thing more shocking than the event that took their lives, is the fact that it has been all but forgotten. Until now. Using eyewitness narratives, rare archival materials, and touching, first-hand accounts from those who escaped with their lives, Bonansinga pieces together the untold story of the sinking of the *Eastland*."

Of all the cemeteries in the Chicago area, Bohemian National received the greatest number of the victims; many buried at no expense to the family.

According to Ted Wachholz, member of FoBNC and President of the EDHS, for all book orders received from this newsletter, EDHS will donate \$2.50 to FoBNC.

Shop their web site:
www.eastlanddisaster.org,
"information resource center"
followed by "Merchandise".
Mention FoBNC.



Note cards

Another gift idea is our new note card sets.

The first set is historic images of the cemetery (4 cards) priced at \$6 for non-members and \$5 for members.

The second set is the Czech Art cards (6 cards) at \$8 for non-members and \$7 for members.

For price and ordering instructions for our new note cards see attached flyer



Help rebind the Historical Records!

There are seven burial books plus a Columbarium book, which need rebinding. These books, the oldest of which dates from 1877, will be rebound in goatskin leather, imprinted with gold leaf, and affixed on the front with a special bookplate. For a \$750 donation you can have your name or a family name inscribed on the bookplate. By doing this you will make it possible for us to preserve these invaluable records. (You may also split the cost with another family name). A gala celebration for those who have donated to this project will follow the completion of the rebinding.

Checks for this tax-deductible donation should be made payable to Bohemian National Cemetery Association.

Deadline for donations is December 27th, 2004.

Please contact:

Ray Capek, 630-834-8291 or
Raycapek@worldnet.att.net

Welcome to our new members!

Leamond A. Allen, Chicago, IL
Bernie & Ellie Babka, Riverside, IL
Pat Brown, Westmont, IL
Jon & Natalie Dvorak, Chicago, IL
Lynnette Libuse Fuerst, Oak Park, IL
Carl Fiaks, Elgin, IL
Glenn J. Haninger, Gahanna, OH
James Hajek, Brookfield, IL
Lani Harrington, Lombard, IL
Barbara Hanzalik Hartpence, Naperville
Phyllis Janda, Hillside, IL
Alice & Keith Kubly, Western Springs, IL
Nancy Leginski, Chicago, IL
Ray & Thelma Malecek, Wood Dale, IL
Diane Minarik, Berwyn, IL
Bess Prazak, Elmhurst, IL
John & Maribeth Tooke, LaGrange Park
Christine Schweih-Defoe, Chicago, IL
James Sladek, Suffolk, VA
Roland Weis, Evanston, IL
Susanne Zielinski, Downers Grove, IL

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New Printer for the BNC Office
FoBNC bought a Hewlett Packard Deskjet 9650 color printer for the office at BNC. The old printer was not suitable for the project Ray Capek and others are doing to enter data from the burial records into computer files. Beginning with the records currently being created, burial information will be on the computer with printouts made on our new printer. We received a very nice Thank you card from BNC office staff. ■

*Dear "Friends",
Thank you so much for the wonderful printer. This will make our job easier and interesting!*

The Office Staff at BNC