

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Spring Issue ~ Vol. XXI No. 4

April 2025

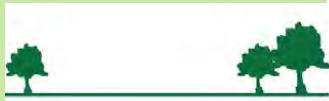
carol jean smetana, editor

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

As the recently elected president of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery, I want to take this opportunity to recognize our past



New president of Friends of BNC Chuck Michalek at the entrance to the administration building

president, Marge Stuckemann. As many of you know, Marge and Evelyn Fergle were the founding mothers of Friends of Bohemian National

Cemetery. Their vision for promoting the cemetery's heritage became the primary catalyst for starting our organization back in 2004. Her strong leadership, tireless

enthusiasm and friendly personality resulted in Friends of BNC's development and the subsequent

(Continued on page 3)

Live from BNC

Once again, as in years past, Chicago's cold winter season and dormant trees cast a silent and empty sensation around the cemetery. Nevertheless, one can discover quiet beauty amidst the rows of snow-covered tombstones, family mausoleums and historic monuments. Outdoor volunteers, especially the lumberjacks led by Chuck Betzold, are likewise dormant and waiting for the warm weather to start the new season of pruning and cutting trees and fallen branches.

As the historic gatehouse has no central heating system (an old unused potbelly stove from years past

remains) only small electric heaters are used to maintain sufficient temperature to keep water pipes from freezing. Volunteers Larry Andersen and Chuck Michalek replaced a small electric wall heater in February. Chuck Betzold updated large outdoor fence signs to advertise the upcoming Tour of the Tombstones on April 27.

In preparation for the April 27th tour, Jenny Llackmani, Friends publicity chair, will be posting info on our Facebook page. If you are on Facebook, you can follow postings about the cemetery at Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery.

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

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Officers of Friends of BNC

President:

Chuck Michalek

Vice-President: *Juli Nelson*

Secretary: *Monica Pechous*

Treasurer: *Linda Burton*

Directors:

Chuck Betzold

Marge Sladek Stueckemann

Jim Trnka

Fund-Raising Co-Chair:

Joseph Topinka

Membership: *Ellen Pomes*

Newsletter: *carol jean smetana*

Publicity: *Jenny Llakmani*

Sales/Marketing:

Juli Nelson

Projects Co-Chair:

Chuck Michalek

Webmaster: *Vacant*



from the editor's laptop

Welcome to our spring edition of *Heritage Happenings*. Our slate of candidates for officers and directors was approved, and we look forward to working with Chuck Michalek as he takes over the role of president. Thank you for all who voted.

Stephen Farley wrote this issue's "Story of Stones," based on his extensive research to discover his family's roots. I hope you enjoy it as

much as I did.

Friends of BNC has been blessed to have a core of dedicated volunteers over the decades, but every organization benefits from the infusion of fresh ideas and vitality that new volunteers bring to the mission. We are pleased that Monica Pechous volunteered last month to be our secretary and grateful that last year Ellen Pomes and Jenny Llakmani stepped up to help with membership and publicity respectively. But we can always use more help! Would you like to put your green thumb to work at the cemetery? Are you an idea person who could join in brainstorming fundraising and project possibilities? Are you a person of action? We could use you on our project team. Would you like to bake goodies for our events or help staff our sales tables? If you are comfortable with 21st century technology, we are still looking for both a webmaster and someone to maintain our online store.

And if you'd like to have an outlet for your creativity, I am ready to step down from editing the newsletter. My first issue as editor was 16 years ago—April 2009—and I know the newsletter would benefit from a fresh approach!.

So please keep us in mind when you are looking for a way to volunteer some time and energy to a cause well worth your effort! Contact me or any of the folks listed at left, or email info@friendsofbnc.org.

*Na shledanou,
carol*

Děkuji Vám!

Linda Burton, Chuck Michalek, and Juli Nelson for their continued service as officers of *Friends of BNC*;

Linda Burton for doing double-duty as treasurer and secretary this past year;

Monica Pechous for volunteering to take on the office of secretary;

Chuck Betzold, Marge Sladek Stueckemann

and **Jim Trnka** for their continued service as directors;

Jenny Llakmani, Ellen Pomes, carol smetana, and Joseph Topinka for their continued service as committee chairs; and

Friends volunteers behind the scenes who provide essential support but wish to remain anonymous.



Donations

Benefactors (\$1000—\$9999)

Marge Sladek Stueckemann *in honor of* Helen Gaydusek and Evelyn Fergle

Sponsors (\$100—\$499)

Anonymous
Judith Engels
Stephen Farley

Lodge Century of Progress/
Bila Hora #231 *in honor of*
Deceased Lodge Members
Carol and Gerald Vovis

Donors (\$25—\$99)

Linda Cabanban *in memory of*
Jon Vincent Dvorak
CSA Fraternal Life

Lodge Brookfield No 475 CSA
April Meyers

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

What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)
public tours, educational membership meetings and fundraisers that helped support preservation projects at the cemetery. While Marge and her husband now reside in a retirement community and are enjoying “a slower pace of life,” her knowledge, spirit and love of BNC will transform into opportunities to advise and support our organization while also relishing the many friendships developed along the way.

In addition to recognizing the contributions Marge provided, I want to take this opportunity to salute the many dedicated past and present members whose passion and financial contributions sustain our mission in so many ways. Perhaps you are motivated by remembering a loved family member or cherished friend. Or you are interested in preserving BNC's ethnic heritage and keeping alive

the accomplishments of past generations, as well as those who served in our military. Or perhaps just enjoying the scenic and pastoral peacefulness and the cemetery's artistic and historical buildings and monuments.

Against the changing times and eroding interest at many cemeteries, Friends of BNC offers an opportunity to achieve these endeavors. We look forward to your continued interest and support.

As a reminder, we are always looking for volunteers to help with the various functions that keep our organization going—our projects, our website, our newsletter, writing thank you notes, and fundraising. Bring us your ideas and energy! Living in the Chicago area is not necessary: our board meets online via zoom every four to six weeks. Reach out to one of our board members or inquire at info@friendsofbnc.org.

Monica Pechous is Friends of

BNC's newest member, and she immediately volunteered to take on the role of secretary for our board meetings. Monica brings a wealth of experience from her involvement with other Czech activities, including her former position as secretary for the Bohemian Lawyers Association. Welcome to Monica!

Finally, special thanks to our organization's past and present cherished volunteers who served and continue to serve as board members and directors and perform vital roles associated with writing, membership, finances, publicity and the editing of this newsletter. They give freely of their time and many talents to our organization. And certainly a big shout out to the outdoor weekly volunteers who roll up their sleeves to spruce up our historic 1877 cemetery.

Chuck Michalek
President

Stories of the Stones: Josef Hladovec

by Stephen Farley

Josef Hladovec (pronounced HLA-do-vetz) was born in Křtěnovice, Tábor region, Bohemia, the youngest of eight — four sisters and four brothers. Leaving his siblings and 63-year-old mother Josefa behind, he set sail from Bremen in May 1867 at the age of 18, with his treasured violin in tow, and proceeded straight to Chicago. By the next spring he was already serving his new community as a founding member of the Bohemian American Sokol Association (a Bohemian gymnastics society).

Josef worked in a tailor shop where he met and fell in love with Františka Chrs; she too had emigrated from Bohemia with her mother and siblings in the spring of 1867. Josef and Františka were married on her 18th birthday, September 12, 1871. After the Great Chicago Fire a few weeks later, Josef started working as a box maker for a local soda water company. Late in 1871 they welcomed their first of three children, a daughter Amelia. In 1874 Josef Hladovec, Jr., was born, followed two years later by Edward Thomas Hladovec.

Throughout their lives, Josef and Františka were active in



Newlyweds Josef Hladovec and Františka Chrs, 1881

the Bohemian community. Františka directed and acted in plays at the Sokol Hall, sang in several choirs, and helped lead cultural events in the predominantly Bohemian Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago, all while raising their three children. Josef Hladovec became a

delegate to Bohemian National Cemetery Association in 1885, representing the Bohemian American Sokol organization. Over the next three decades, he was active with the cemetery association and served two one-year terms as president of the BNCA board, in 1889, the year the Civil War Monument's cornerstone was laid, and again in 1915, the year of the *Eastland* Disaster.



Josef Jr, Amelia and Edward Thomas Hladovec in 1891

Josef's career took off in the 1880s as he transitioned from an employee to the owner of the renamed Jos. Hladovec Soda Water Company. As he gained wealth and stature in the Bohemian community, Josef asked his brother Jan to come over from the homeland in 1880 to help him and then in 1885 invited his other brother Frank to come and bring their mother Josefa.

By 1890, Josef had moved his



Josef (third from left) and his soda water crew in 1881. Josef's brother Jan is second from left, and Josef's son Edward is second from right.



entrepreneurial focus to beer, founding the Jos. Hladovec Brewing Company with Vaclav Topinka, his wife's stepfather, and Vaclav Hodek, his daughter Amelia's father-in-law. In late 1891 Josef sold his brewing company to investors who renamed it Monarch Brewing, which lasted until 1967.



Josef Hladovec



Františka Chrs Hladovec

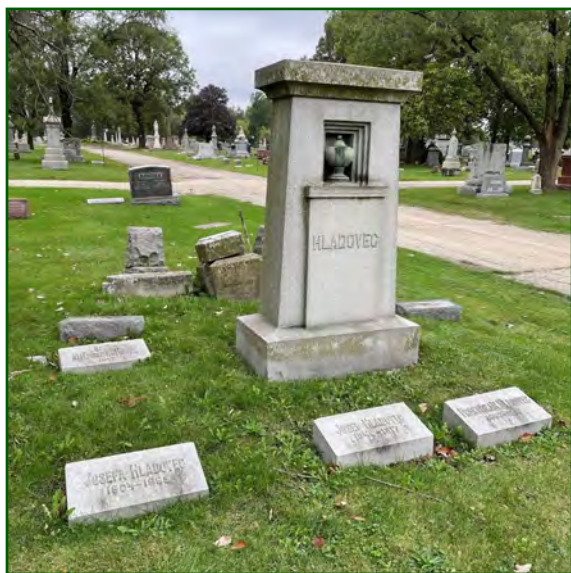
He gathered 72 shareholders, primarily other beer companies, by offering cheaper bulk manufacturing costs and shared profits. They built a huge brewery at 2118 S. Albany Avenue and W. 21st Place and the company became an instant success.

Their final years brought gradual decline for Josef and Františka as they began to suffer from various illnesses that

Living on the funds he earned from the sale of his brewery, Josef traveled to Bohemia for the first time since he emigrated (in 1892 and 1900) and established

between Bohemians in the United States and the home country. Part of those efforts involved him organizing a committee of 25 to build and program the Bohemian Pavilion for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

limited their ability to serve on the community boards and organizations that they treasured so much. After a life of change, service, community and art, Františka died on February 29, 1916, at her daughter Amelia's home. Josef died a little more than a year later, on December 30, 1917. They were both cremated and buried at Bohemian National Cemetery in the family lot.



Josef Hladovec purchased the family lot at Bohemian National cemetery for \$65 in November 1888. His mother Josefa was interred there the next year. The lot also holds the ashes of Františka and Josef, as well as those of their son Josef Jr and their granddaughter Amelia, Josef Jr's daughter.

personal relationships with some of the political and cultural leaders in the country soon to be Czechoslovakia, including the renowned composer Antonin Dvorak and the father of Czech independence Tomáš Masaryk, helping to build strong ties

By 1901 Josef decided to create a new beer venture using the old corporate shell of his Jos. Hladovec Brewing Company. He built a wholesale manufacturer and distributor to a number of different breweries, calling the business Garden City Brewing.

Josef and Františka's great-great-grandson Stephen Farley is a public artist and retired Arizona State Senator who was drawn to the study of his ancestors' stories after viewing the TV miniseries Roots nearly fifty years ago. He has made several research trips to Chicago to visit BNC and the Hladovecs' old stomping grounds so he could fill in details of their lives.

This story is condensed from his privately published (and fully illustrated) 2025 book of all his family stories called There's More to All This.

If you want to contact Stephen, his email is sfarley62@gmail.com

All photos courtesy of Stephen Farley

**Upcoming
Events at
Bohemian
National
Cemetery**



TOURS OF THE TOMBSTONES

Sunday, April 27 at 11 am and 2 pm

Reservations recommended and can be made on our website friendsofbnc.org. \$10 for members, \$20 for nonmembers. Meet at the gatehouse 15 minutes prior to tour time. See page seven of newsletter for more details.

MEMORIAL DAY EVENTS

Monday, May 26

Events begin at the cemetery at **9:00 am** and include flag-raising ceremony, memorial program in Ceremony Hall, and an optional cemetery tour. Events are free and no pre-registration is necessary. Join us in honoring members of our military who gave their lives in service to our country. See back page of newsletter for more details.

**Welcome to
Our New Members!**

Amy Allen Family ... Huntsville AL

Jason Cadek ... Omaha NE

Aaron Lisek ... Anna IL

April Meyers ... Winthrop Harbor IL

Monica Pechous ... Chicago IL



The Quiet Beauty of Winter
*The Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum was dedicated on
Memorial Day 1960.*



ENJOY SPRING AT THE CEMETERY ON OUR TOURS OF THE TOMBSTONES Sunday, April 27 at 11:00 am and 2:00 pm

Walking tours are led by an experienced guide and cemetery historian and leave from the 1893 gatehouse, the main entrance to the cemetery. Refreshments are provided there before and after the tours.

Each tour is limited to 30 participants.

Cost is \$10 for Friends members and \$20 for nonmembers.

Reservations are recommended and can be made online with a credit card at friendsofbnc.org. If space is available, you may pay by cash or check the day of the tour.

Please arrive 15 minutes before tour starting time.



Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

With BNCA's limited resources, challenges can occur for the maintenance and repair of large machinery, including diesel tractors and trucks. Nef Morales, a recently retired mechanic, volunteered his services to help work on some of the cemetery's diesel equipment. In his first month of volunteering,

Nef has already made significant repairs to two pieces of equipment. We are grateful for his willingness to volunteer his valuable services.

As a reminder, we are always looking for volunteers to help with many of the tasks around the cemetery. If you would like to help, please inquire at info@friendsofbnc.org

Chuck Michalek
President



Nef Morales brings much needed mechanical maintenance and repair skills to our volunteer ranks.

The Quiet Beauty of Winter
The Odd Fellows Monument, dedicated in 1937, was funded by Bohemian lodges from the International Order of Odd Fellows and its sister organization Daughters of Rebekah.



*Friends of Bohemian
National Cemetery*

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



*Heritage Happenings
Spring 2025*

MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE

Monday, May 26, 2025

Bohemian National Cemetery Association

and

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

invite you to join us at the cemetery
on Memorial Day to honor the men and women
who gave their lives in service to our country.

9:00 am Assemble at the gatehouse at the cemetery's
main entrance

9:15 am Flag-raising ceremony at the
World Wars I and II Memorial

9:30 am Service in Ceremony Hall in the
crematorium/columbarium building

After the service, return to the gatehouse for
refreshments and a walking tour of BNC's military
monuments led by Chuck Betzold, United States Air
Force veteran and BNCA trustee.



Bohemian National Cemetery, 5255 N Pulaski Road, Chicago ~ 773-539-8442