

Pavučina Corner – By Tony Kadlec

Český Národní Hřbitov-Bohemian National Cemetery of Silver Lake

This past Saturday, the Bohemian National Cemetery Association held its annual meeting at the Komensky School House. This cemetery is the final resting place for more than 900 individuals and is located just South of State Highway 7 East, between Lace & Kale, approximately 2 miles West of Silver Lake.



Historical Photo of Bohemian National Cemetery of Silver Lake, Circa 1912 (source: mnhs.org)

“The Bohemian National Cemetery Association was organized in 1873 by the same group of men who started the Reading and Educational Society, but was entirely separate from it. At that time the only cemeteries were church affiliated, and many of the pioneers having come here for religious freedom wanted a non-sectarian cemetery. John Kasper, Joseph Kadlec, and Joseph Mikulecky, trustees acting for the Association, bought two acres of land on a wooded hillside from Anton Nunvář (Nuwash) for \$20. Joseph Kasper surveyed the land and lots 24 feet square were laid out. Many early settlers donated labor and it was credited to them in their purchase of a lot. Some of the early records read, “Joseph Kadlec, \$1.16 for lot, plus four days’ labor; Anton Nunvář, \$1.15 for lot, plus four day’s labor. Anton Zeleny paid \$2.50 for his lot without donated labor. Quarterly dues were assessed, and once or twice non-payment of dues resulted in the lot being foreclosed and sold to another.

Two lots were set aside for those not able or desiring to buy full lots, and single places were sold there or given. Many infants are buried there. Another lot was set aside in the center of the cemetery for services. Each Memorial Day, family gathered at the Bohemian Hall and marched to the cemetery, nearly two miles. The oldest and the youngest went with horse and buggy, and Memorial services, with music and a speaker were held. After the practice ended the lot was sold to the Andrews family at a premium.

In 1899 Joseph Friauf, Joseph Muzik, and John Marvan, trustees, bought an additional acre on the east side of the cemetery from Frank Nuwash. The lots were then renumbered and four roads were laid out. In 1937 another acre was purchased south of the cemetery, but was not surveyed and platted until 1978.



Some of the founding members of the Bohemian National Cemetery, from left to right: Anton Nunvář, Josef Kadlec, and John Marvan.

Historically, the Association held two meetings a year, on the fourth Sundays of April and October, in the spring to plan summer needs and projects in the fall to settle all accounts, pay all bills, and elect officers. The Constitution and by-laws are comprehensive but somewhat outdated. One excellent provision states “A member may speak to a point but twice if other members wish to be heard on the subject. Further access to the floor requires the consent of all present.” (History of McLeod County 1978, p. 80).

Membership in Bohemian National Cemetery Association is open to all people regardless of ethnic or religious background (i.e. you don't need to be a Bohemian Freethinker!). For more information regarding membership, please feel free to contact one of the Association officers. Currently the Association is served by officers: Bob Nunvar, President/Treasurer; Tony Kadlec, Vice President; Jolen Bentz, Secretary and recent cemetery Trustees have included: Marjorie Ruzicka, Bonnie Sustacek, and Julie Juaire.

Connecting with Your Ancestors in the Bohemian National Cemetery

Did you know that volunteers have already uploaded information for 250 of the approximately 900 gravesites at the Bohemian National Cemetery of Silver Lake?

The website www.findagrave.com is a free, online resource of gravesite information that includes records for more than 48 million individuals, both famous and non-famous people, located throughout the world. At this website you can look up the “Bohemian Cemetery” in McLeod County, Minnesota or check to see if your family’s cemetery or individual graves are listed and commemorated. If not, it is a simple process to contribute your information.

Mluvíte Česky? Do You Speak Czech?

A good share of tombstones in the Bohemian National Cemetery of Silver Lake include inscriptions which are written in Czech language and may hold clues to the family’s village of origin or their occupation, religious background, etc.

Take for example, the tombstone of my great-great-great grandmother, Františka (nee Kosinova) Kutina-Schilling (born 7 June 1816 in Choceň, Vysoké Mýto, CZ, died 20 December 1896), which is located in the Bohemian National Cemetery:



After a considerable amount of careful cleaning of the lichens off her gravestone and with interpretation assistance from my Czech cousin Jiří Petr we deduced the following:

Zde odpočívá v; Pánu zesnulá; FRANTIŠKA; Budiž jí země lehká; Jako mrazem hyne tráva; Pomíjí tak všecka sláva

(Translated: “Here rests in; the Lord of the deceased; FRANTIŠKA; Let her soul rest easy; So the green grass is perished by frost; that all glory is transient”)

Tombstone of Františka (nee Kosinova) Kutina-Schilling at Bohemian National Cemetery, circa 2008 BC (Before Cleaning).

Here are some common Czech words that you will find on tombstones in the Bohemian National Cemetery:

born--narozený

died--zemřel

mother-- matka, matky

father-- otec, otcové, otce, táta, taťka, tatík, tatínek

wife -- manželka, choť, žena

husband -- manžel, choť, muž

daughter --dcera

son—syn, synáček

year—rok

The Czech Months and Their Derivation (note in Czech language, names of months are not capitalized):

January -- leden (from *led*, ice)

February -- únor (probably from the word root *-nor-*, infinitive form *nořit (se)*, to plunge, to welter, as the ice welters under the lake surface)

March -- březen (either from *bříza*, birch, or from *březí*, with young, in-foal etc., as the forest animals, mainly hares and rabbits are gravid at that time)

April -- duben (derived from *dub*, oak)

May -- květen (from *květ*, blossom)

June -- červen (either from *červený*, red, or from *červ*, worm, (czerw) because the worm (called kermes in English) was the source for red dye for centuries in Eastern Europe. It's similar to the cochineal insect in the Americas, which also yields a red dye. The grubs were gathered in June, and they gave the name for the month of June in Polish (Czerwiec))

July -- červenec (the same as with červen)

August -- srpen (from *srp*, sickle)

September -- září (literally "it shines", but most possible from *říje*, the time when the - mainly deer - males want to couple)

October -- říjen (from *říje*, see September)

November -- listopad (literally "leaf-fall")

December -- prosinec (probably from *prase*, pig, because slaughtering hogs and hog roasts are common at that time)

Source: Wikipedia.org

As a rule, you should always stress the first syllable of a Czech word!

If you have any contributions or suggestions for topics for future columns, please contact me by email: tkadlec@gmail.com or call me: (651) 271-0422 or send your letters to my attention: 1408 Fairmount Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105. Děkuji! Tony Kadlec