

VIA HERITAGE NEWS

The Newsletter of the Via Foundation Czech Heritage Society

July 2005

Dear Members and Supporters of the Via Foundation Czech Heritage Society,

You have just received your second copy of the Via Heritage News. Through this newsletter, we would like to share with you several stories that

illustrate all that can be accomplished with the united support of donors. Donors, who are committed to the ongoing restoration of the numerous smaller monuments in Bohe-



Letter from the Director

mia and Moravia that were virtually condemned to ruin during the communist regime, and which are endangered even 15 years after its fall.

You will become acquainted with our supporters Marka Bednar and Don Hamer, and learn about the many local volunteers, non-profit associations and municipalities who have joined in the fight to rescue „ their" monuments and help preserve our common history. If anything in our newsletter interests you, or if you would like to know more about the activities of the Via Foundation, please feel free to contact us. We would like to sincerely thank all our donors for their generous support. And to those of you who have not as yet made the decision to join us, please remember that the fate of these unique small monuments hinges on all of us. Time is running out for many of them, so please do not wait too long with your decision and support.

Thank you.

Jiří Bárta and **Táňa Hlavatá**

HUNDREDS OF SMALL MONUMENTS STILL AWAIT PRESERVATION

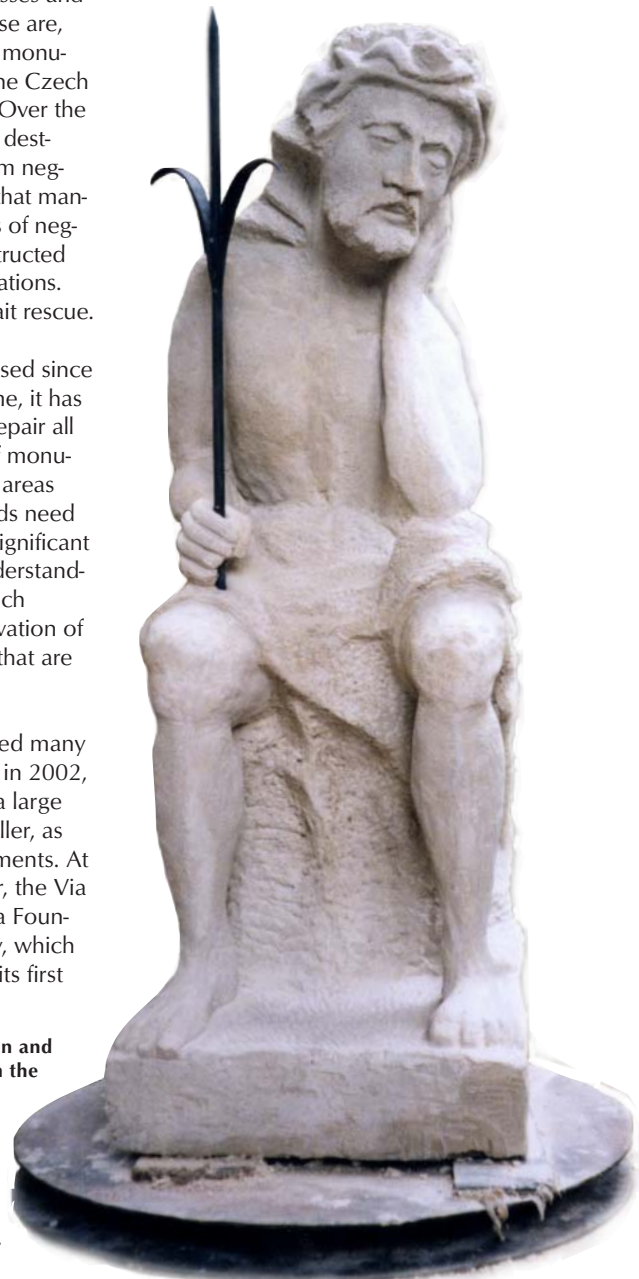
When traveling through the Czech countryside, you come across them almost everywhere – in every small village, on crossroads, in the meadows, along the roads and in the shadows of the woods – small chapels, crosses and commemoration columns. These are, however, only a fraction of the monuments that actually existed in the Czech Republic before World War II. Over the communist period, many were destroyed – either physically or from neglect. Some of the monuments that managed to survive the many years of neglect, have already been reconstructed and preserved for future generations. Many others, however, still await rescue.

Even though 15 years have passed since the fall of the communist regime, it has still not been enough time to repair all the damage. The renovation of monuments is only one of the many areas where state and municipal funds need to be invested, with the most significant monuments therefore, and understandably, receiving priority. Not much money is left over for the renovation of the many smaller monuments that are also in desperate need of aid.

The severe flooding that afflicted many regions in the Czech Republic in 2002, has also been responsible for a large part of the damage to the smaller, as well as larger, historical monuments. At the time of this natural disaster, the Via Foundation established the Via Foundation Czech Heritage Society, which raised over \$ 90 thousands in its first

The Baroque ECCE HOMO column and statue with the seated Christ from the year 1710 in Dvorce near. The column stands on the boundary of the water-shed of the Black and Baltic seas. The statue was renovated by the Patriotic Pilgrim Association with the support of a grant from the Via Heritage Fund.

year, much of this from American donors. From grants distributed from the Fund, 38 smaller monuments were renovated; however, another 150 requests still await support.



SUPPORTED PROJECTS

The grants distributed last year from the Via Heritage Fund went to support close to forty projects. In return, the Via Foundation received many thank-you letters that, in fact, really belong to the donors, whose financial support made the restoration of these smaller monuments possible.

The Chapel in Hněvnice

For the chapel in the Western Bohemian town of Hněvnice, its very existence was dependent upon its timely renovation. Already over twenty years ago, it had been considered unrecoverable due to its dilapidated state and had been removed from the list of protected monuments. Nevertheless, in 2004, the Hněvnice town chapel was brought back to life. The rescue mission was undertaken by the Association for the Renewal of the Hněvnice Township, who received a grant of \$ 3,170 from the Via Heritage Fund for the renovation of this small sacral monument. „We are happy about the renovation of the chapel. The project even generated great interest at a meeting in Germany of former families from the area. In 2005, we would like to once again ordain the chapel on the occasion of the 890th anniversary celebration of Hněvnice“, says the chairman of the Association for the Renewal of the Hněvnice Township and deputy-mayor, Mr. Milan Bouzek.



The chapel before and after reconstruction.



The Adéla, Flóra and Adolf Springs

In first half of the 19th century, the farmer, folk healer and founder of modern hydrotherapy, Vincenc Priessnitz, established a health spa not far from the town of Jeseník. There are dozens of small historical monuments scattered throughout the area, many of which were built in gratitude by the patients of the spa. A treatment that is still practiced up until today is the Priessnitz wrap – a wet compress over a dry wrap, which lowers fevers and alleviates pain. The extensive number of these historical objects is an apt



The springs before and after reconstruction.

memorial to this famous native. Included among them are the Adéla, Flóra and Adolf springs, which were used for medical purposes as a part of the spa treatment. Following WWII, the small monuments around the spa met the same fate as many of the other monuments in the border region. The German language inscriptions were removed and they were left to fall into ruin. The non-functioning and deteriorating springs were taken over by the Brontosaurus Society. With the help of \$ 3,000 from the VIA Heritage Fund, as well as many hours of volunteer work by the members of the Brontosaurus Society, all three springs were reconstructed and an access trail leading through the area was renovated. The chairman of the Brontosaurus Society, Tom Hradil, explained how it was accomplished: „with the help of enthusiastic volunteers and the support of the Via Heritage Fund, because without their help, it would not have been possible to undertake the renovation.“

The Statue of St. Dominik

In Lestkov there are a series of small monuments that are gradually being

The statue before and after reconstruction



reconstructed by the Helping Ourselves Association, working in cooperation with the local government and the Roman Catholic church. Among them is also a public fountain in the town, which was damaged by an American army jeep at the end of WWII, and finally removed in the 1950s. In its place, there are plans to build a new public fountain. Another of the small monuments in Lestkov is the statue of St. Dominik, which was reconstructed with the help of \$ 3,300 from the Via Heritage Fund in 2004.

The Libčice Chapel

The small chapel with its belfry, dating from the year 1937, is the only reminder of the town of Libčice, which in the 1970's gave way to the construction of the Želivka – Švihov water reservoir. The town's inhabitants were evacuated and all the buildings were destroyed, with the exception of the small chapel. For thirty years, this small monument was left deserted



The chapel before and after reconstruction

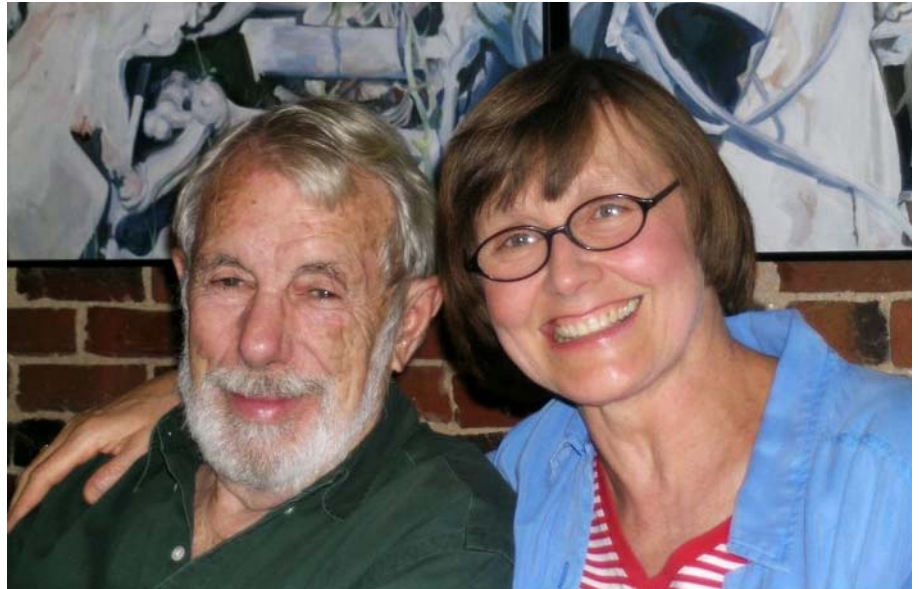
and unmaintained. The chapel became overgrown by the surrounding bush, the plaster and inner masonry began to badly crumble due to dampness, and part of the roof fell in, damaged by mould and rot. Today, the chapel already features a new roof, windows, door and plastering. The municipality of Dolní Kralovice, which is undertaking the renovation, received a grant in the amount of \$ 3,000. Once this is completed, they plan to invite the former inhabitants of the town of Libčice to come and celebrate the re-opening and ordination of the chapel.



Donald W. Hamer and Marka Bednar have made a generous donation in the amount of 5,000 USD to the Via Foundation and Via Heritage Fund. Both have a very close and personal relationship to the Czech Republic and come to visit several times a year. Don Hamer founded and runs the firm „ State of the Art”, which produces miniature electronic parts for medical appliances and the aircraft industry in Pennsylvania. His wife, Marka Bednar, is a graduate of Charles University, Prague and worked for 25 years for the Pennsylvania State University library. She is also interested in contemporary Czech literature.

Why did you decided to direct your financial contribution to the Czech Republic?

We have a strong connection with the Czech Republic, initially because Marka grew up and got her education there. Over the last 15 years, this connection deepened through our many visits there, particularly our travels and hikes around the country. We love the Czech and Moravian countrysides - the castles, old towns, mountains. And, of course, we love Prague. We have become aware of many aspects of Czech life that stagnated during the communist era. We very much want to see the country flourish on all fronts, but particularly as a civil and caring society with a strong community spirit, and we want to contribute to that goal.



Why does the Via Heritage Fund appeal to you?

Few years back, we happened to see first hand the success of one of the Via Foundation's community development grants for a small town park in Northern Bohemia. When we found out about the scope of the Via Foundation's activities, we particularly liked the Heritage Fund grant program, because it helps local citizen groups to preserve precious historical monuments in the Czech small towns and countryside, many of which are in a state of deterioration. We want to support the active involvement of Czech citizens in improving their communities and, at the same time, to help with preserving the country's rich tapestry of historical sites, which we love.

Don Hamer & Marka Bednar

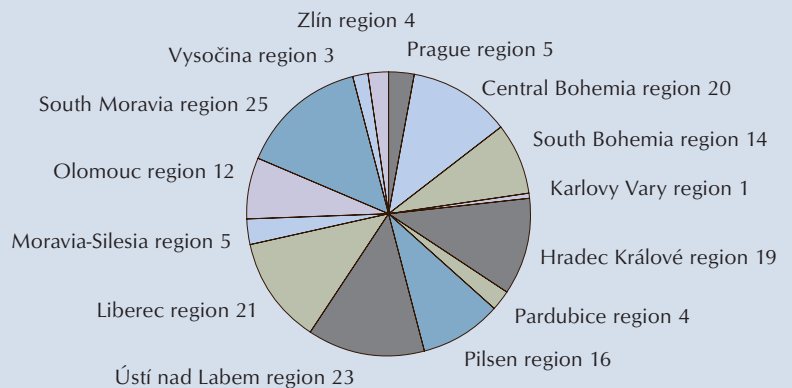
Do you have any other philanthropic activities/interests?

We contribute to Don's three alma maters and to other environmental, cultural and human service organizations in the USA. We have also contributed to a samizdat literature project of the Czech National Library in Prague and to a new Faculty of Liberal Arts Library at the Masaryk University in Brno.

Program statistic

Number of applications	172
Number of disqualified applications	33
Number of consultations	60
Average requested grant	CZK 53,086
Total amount requested	CZK 9,130,851
Total to be distributed	CZK 2,200,000
Number of grants bestowed	38
Success rate of applicants	22%

Number of applications by regions



MONUMENTS THAT ARE STILL AWAITING PRESERVATION

With your support, we will be able to preserve more small historical monuments that give the Czech, Moravian and Silesian landscapes their unforgettable character and are an important part of our common heritage.

Please help us increase membership in The Via Foundation Czech Heritage Society!

With your help, we would like to address those of your friends who may be interested in becoming members of The Via Foundation Czech Heritage Society and helping endangered Czech monuments in this way. We have enclosed 2 giving brochures and we hope that we can enlist new members with your help.



Radostice u Vchynice – The Chapel and belfry dedicated to St. James

Up until the beginning of the Second World War, the inhabitants of Radostice actively frequented their chapel, which dates from the end of the 18th century.

The chapel is connected to a series of local traditions, which the local inhabitants have begun to revive since the fall of communism. The chapel has also undergone a series of small repairs, which, however, are not sufficient and the current state of the building is in desperate need of complete professional reconstruction.

Requested grant support: \$ 3,125



Lišný u Železného Brodu – The “Calvary” group of sculptures that portray the crucifixion of Christ with the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist, were created by an unknown folk stonemason in 1807. The damaged monuments show their age. In many places, the stone has been chemically eroded, damaged by the forces of nature, and is covered with a film of impurities. The main damage to this monument has not, however,

been caused by time, but by vandalism and thieves, who not too long ago detached and stole the figure of the Virgin Mary from the statuary.

Requested grant support: \$ 2,330

Větrov u Frýdlantu – The Statue of St. Mary Magdalena

The precise story behind this statue is not known. Experts estimate that it was created at the beginning of the 19th Century, although the date 1687 has been found inscribed on the pedestal. In 2002, the statue was knocked down by a falling tree. In order to save the monument from further damage and deterioration, it was temporarily moved to the neighboring town of Frýdlant, where it is awaiting the necessary funds for its renovation.

Requested grant support: \$ 3,330



Hartmanice – The former Hartmanice synagogue

The synagogue in Hartmanice was built around 1880. The building survived the WWII period, when it was closed and used as a carpentry workshop. It continued on in this capacity following the end of the war. During the communist period, it was used as a storage house for tires for military vehicles. Ironically, because of this, it is practically the only remaining synagogue in the Šumava region that has remained up until the present day, albeit in a very bad state of disrepair. The Hartmanice Memorial Civic Association, established in 2002, has dedicated itself to the preservation of the synagogue and the building of a memorial to Czech-German-Jewish relations.

Requested grant support: \$ 3,330



Would you like to contact us?

Did something in our newsletter catch your attention? Do you have a question, or an idea you would like to share with us? If so, please contact us in the Czech Republic or USA:

The Via Foundation, Jelení 195/9, Czech Republic, phone: +(420) 233 113 370; Jiří Bárta, Executive Director, e-mail: jiri.barta@nadacevia.cz; Táňa Hlavatá, Philanthropy manager, e-mail: tana.hlavata@nadacevia.cz; Carol Hochman, Chair of the Board, Friends of Via, P. O. Box 12592, Pittsburgh, PA 15241, phone: (412) 221-4057, e-mail: CarolH1541@aol.com