

Excavation of lost cemetery draws to close

Construction project delayed nearly 2 months

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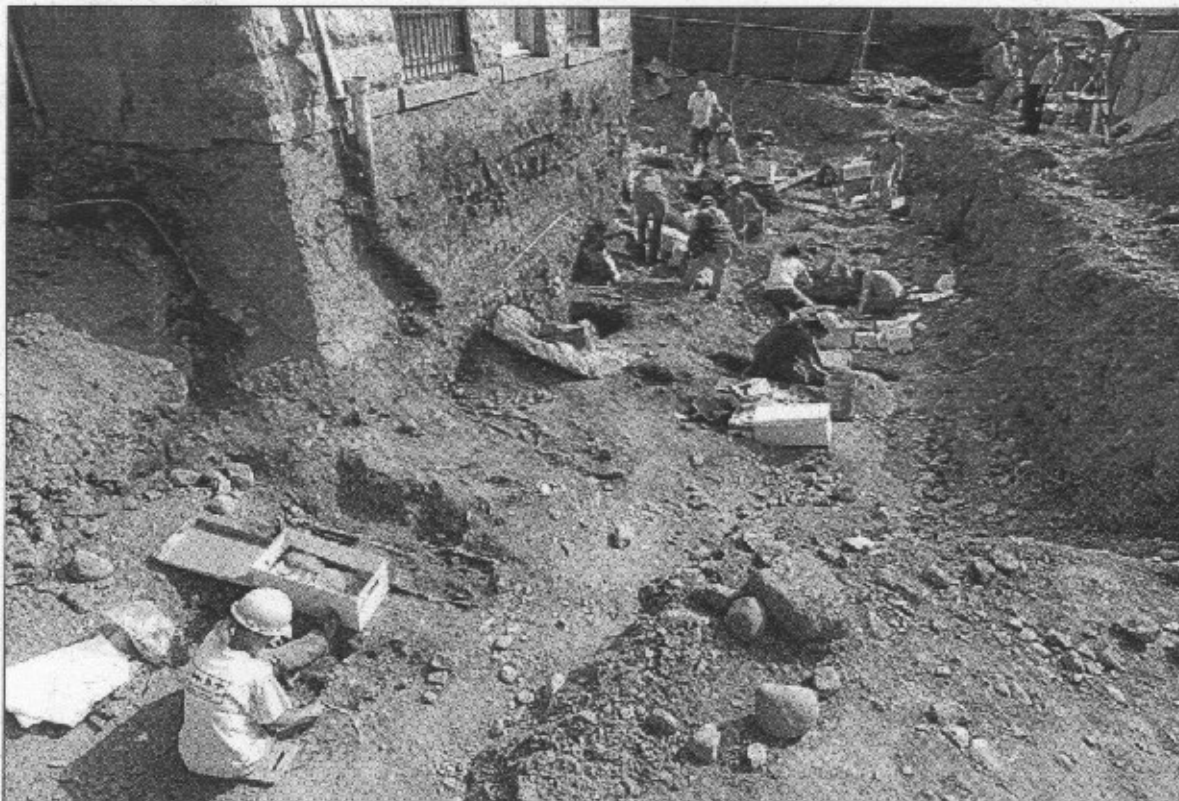
CITY OF NEWBURGH – Archaeologists will scrape the dirt from the last of 104 skeletons this week – seven months after construction workers discovered the bones of three people buried behind the old Broadway School.

Dirk Marcucci of Landmark Archaeology said his crew will finish its on-site work by Friday. The archaeologists uncovered a lost cemetery inch by inch and bone by bone. Marcucci said he thought, in the beginning, they might finish digging in a couple of weeks.

“There was no way of knowing what we’d encounter,” he said.

They found graves cut through with utility lines, skeletons protruding from stone walls and bodies resting just inches below a sidewalk. The scope of a century’s desecration grew each time they opened a new section of ground.

That ends this week. The archaeologists will leave the



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The crew from Landmark Archaeology continues to catalog the remaining 31 sets of bones from outside the future courthouse in the City of Newburgh. The team is nearing the end of its work after 18 weeks spent uncovering 104 bodies.

site to the construction crews who have already overhauled much of the school. City Assessor Steve Ruelke said the building should be ready to

begin its next incarnation as the city courthouse by early March 2009. Renovation continued during the excavation, but workers had to plan stages

around the cemetery. Ruelke, who is overseeing the courthouse project for the city, said they will now be able to lay utility lines and install perma-

nent power sources needed to finish work. The excavation delayed the project by about two months.

Marcucci said a lot of work remains to figure out who they found during all those months of digging.

They had started off shipping remains to Kenneth Nystrom, assistant anthropology professor at SUNY New Paltz, but the volume quickly outgrew his space and many of the remains went to the New York State Museum in Albany for safe keeping.

A few skeletons will remain behind because they’re partially contained in the building’s foundation.

Marcucci said Nystrom will begin answering questions about things like gender, age and nutrition while Landmark continues to study the other artifacts found and analyzes logistics of the site. They’ll prepare a report, due out in about a year.

The city plans to eventually re-enter the people with memorials in and outside the courthouse. A committee is still trying to figure out the details of the memorials and ceremonies.

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