

PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS OF NEW YORK CITY



Newsletter No. 57

March 1992

CONTENTS

Minutes, General Membership Meeting, November 13, 1991.....	1
Minutes, General Membership Meeting, January 25, 1992.....	3
Newspaper articles.....	4
Pro bono opportunities.....	15
Lecture.....	17
Amendments to PANYC bylaws.....	18
PANYC Membership Application.....	19

Material for the PANYC Newsletter may be sent to Rebecca Yamin, editor, Elbasco Environmental, 160 Chubb Ave., Lyndhurst, New Jersey 07071. To ensure inclusion in the next issue, please submit material at least 5 days prior to the next scheduled meeting.

NOTICE OF NEXT MEETING: January 25, 1992
New York State Museum, Albany, Concourse Level, Rooms A and B
General Membership: 1:15 PM

Minutes of the PANYC General Membership Meeting November 13, 1991

President Nan Rothschild, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Minutes of the 9/25/91 meeting were approved as mailed.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Spritzer reported a balance of \$1970.98 in the PANYC account, reflecting 45 members, 3 non-members, and 5 subscriptions. In the '90-'91 year there were 16 non-renewals of memberships/subscriptions. The secretary was requested to send reminder postcards to these 16.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: 1) Anne Donadeo had contacted Rothschild when NBC aired a piece on Bob Diamond's efforts on the Atlantic Ave. tunnel in Brooklyn. NBC was contacted by Toni Silver and they offered PANYC an opportunity to state our viewpoint but we were unable to prepare an appropriate statement in the time allotted. [An update on Diamond's progress: the Brooklyn Railroad Association has applied for museum status but letters questioning whether the legal process has been handled properly have also been filed.] Rothschild stressed the importance of the correct tone and message for any PANYC statement. PANYC should be offering a helpful and positive statement about the value of archaeological resources and our willingness to be of assistance if called upon. Barbara Davis and Shelly Spritzer will contact Diamond to find out what his Museum status and plans are. 2) Daniel Pagano reported that Ed Platt (Institute of Anthropology) has again gained the public eye with an exhibit at Queens Borough Hall. Platt has expressed to Pagano an interest in working with a professional/professional committee to facilitate the Institute's professionalism.

MEMBERSHIP: Ms. Spritzer submitted prototype of new membership form that includes a statement of purpose and statement of ethics.

ACTION: New chair is needed for this committee that meets on an ad hoc basis. If Toni Silver does not agree to continue as chair, Barbara Davis will take the position.

ARCHIVES: Ms. Marshall reported that the collection of material is proceeding. Joan Geismar contacted Ms. Ashton, Director of the New-York Historical Society Library, regarding their serving as repository of PANYC archives. N-YHS is interested in archaeological reports on NYC sites but perhaps PANYC could also send newsletters for storage. Pagano offered LPC as a repository for 1 vol. of each newsletter, hopefully to be inventoried through LPC. Marshall reminded retiring officers to submit files to her committee.

AWARD: According to Ms. Cantwell, announcements requesting nominations are to go out soon. Karen Rubinson forwarded by proxy her suggestion of Ed Friedman as the recipient for the public service award. Ms. Marshall recommended that the paper earning the student award be available for review. Perhaps the winning paper or at least an abstract could be printed in the newsletter.

EDUCATION: Ms. Geismar resigned from the committee. Pagano has arranged for JoAnne McLean of Long Island to speak at the JFK High School in the Bronx.

LEGISLATION: (1) Pagano's office does have copies of successful city, state, and federal archaeology preservation laws that should be studied for applicability to NYC. (2) Through Executive Order 29 the city's Office of Environmental Conservation (OEC) was established and Revisions to City Order 91 have been adopted. Pagano recommended the publication of both actions in the PANYC newsletter. (3) The draft Environmental Assessment Statement was not issued on November 1 as scheduled and PANYC members are still able to write Gary Deane and ask to receive materials as "an interested party."

MUSEUM: Geismar is working with Andy Svedlow and Cheryl ~~Barkoff~~^{Barthelome} of the Museum of the City of New York on fall 1992 program. Three Sundays (11/1, 11/8, 11/15) will feature two speakers each on the theme "life in the city."

PARKS: Ms. Geismar is working with Alex Brasch, NYC Parks Dept., to establish small teaching seminars to raise archaeological consciousness of park rangers. Michael Parrington, with only open NYC site at the moment, has agreed to allow 6 rangers at a time to visit the Foley Square site in coordination with information session at the Parks office.

PUBLIC PROGRAM: Ms. Geismar reported that May 9th has been selected for the 1:00 - 3:00 program at the Museum of the City of New York. Michael Parrington will be presenting a paper but Geismar asked for other speakers who may have interesting site topics. No specific theme has been selected. Shelly Spritzer volunteered to join this committee.

RESEARCH AND PLANNING: Pagano reports that committee will be looking at the ten year old "Toward a Predictive Model."

SPECIAL PUBLICATION: Ms. Cantwell reported that the committee is still waiting for the mechanicals from outside consultants. The question of distribution was raised. Roger Moeller will still need to be contacted for possible distribution coordination.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: (1) Spritzer related that PANYC has been billed \$50 for taxes because we did not notify the state within the scheduled deadline that we had no profits to declare. (2) Geismar raised the issue of low meeting attendance and suggested introduction of a featured speaker/discussion at the next meeting to spark interest with a special note of the feature in the minutes' mailing. (3) In order to establish a mechanism for replacing a member of the Executive Board, S. Marshall moved to amend the By-laws to read as follows: If a member of the Executive Board is unable to complete his or her term of office, the Executive Board shall recommend a replacement to the general membership which shall vote on the replacement. Cantwell seconded and the amendment was accepted. (4) Nan asked the membership for a consensus on a January joint meeting with NYAC and she will contact Karen Hartgen concerning that possibility.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Cece Kirkorian, Secretary 1991-1992

NOTICE OF NEXT MEETING: March 25, 1992
Hunter College, Room 710
Executive Board: 6:15 PM
General Membership: 7:00 PM

Minutes of the PANYC General Membership Meeting January 25, 1991

(Due to lack of a quorum, the meeting and, therefore, the following minutes are considered unofficial.)

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Minutes of the 11/13/91 meeting were amended to reflect corrected proper names and titles.

TREASURER'S REPORT: A balance of \$1960.00 is in the PANYC account. The account has been switched to The Bowery which will not file service charges as long as the balance remains at \$1,000.00 or above.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: 1) In order to adhere to By-Law procedures, two proposals for By-Law amendments brought before the membership in the last meeting and the PANYC elections ballot must be received by PANYC members two weeks prior to the next general meeting when voting shall take place. [The proposals and ballot are attached.] 2) A task force, chaired by Senator David Patterson has been established to oversee the burial issues of the Foley Square site. Ms. Rothschild has been appointed to this task force.

PARKS: Ms. Geismar met with Alex Brasch, NYC Parks Dept., and 15 Parks rangers to raise archaeological consciousness of park rangers. She felt it was very successful.

PUBLIC PROGRAM: Ms. Geismar reported that May 9th has been selected for the 1:00 - 3:00 program at the Museum of the City of New York. To date the selected speakers include: Geismar, Barbara Davis and Michael Parrington.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: (1) Nan Rothschild will appoint a Nominations Committee to form a slate for a March vote. (2) Geismar again raised the issue of low meeting attendance. Ms. Rothschild suggested setting aside fifteen minutes for exchanging information, or giving status reports of current work, at the next meeting. A special note of the upcoming feature should be included in the minutes' mailing. (3) Diana Wall suggested expediting the PANYC meetings by asking for reports rather than running through the total list of committees.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Cece Kirkorian, Secretary 1991-1992

The New York Times

EDITORIALS/LETTERS SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1991

Early Black Burial Ground Recalls Alleged Slave Conspiracy

In 1741 Hughson's Tavern on "upper" Broadway (located a short distance from the recently discovered 18th-century Negro burial ground in lower Manhattan, news article, Oct. 9) was at the conspiratorial center of the story of the Great Negro Plot, an alleged slave cabal to burn down the city.

A citywide investigation followed a mysterious series of fires, and a roundup of scores of black slave suspects ensued.

The tavern, owned by John Hughson, a white man, was the secret meeting place, argued the prosecutor, Attorney General Richard Bradley, where the black defendants were said to have conspired to take over the city.

The incriminating testimony of Hughson's barmaid, Mary Burton, a 16-year-old indentured servant, marked the fate of many of the suspects: 34 people were convicted in the plot, 13 black men were burned at the stake and 17 hanged. Two white women and two white men (including Hughson) were also hanged.

There is no known record of where the executed were buried. But it is reasonable to speculate that they too

may lie in the newly discovered cemetery.

CHRISTOPHER MOORE

The writer is researching a book on New York City's colonial history.

AM NEWS 11-10-91

Little-known history of NYC's Black cemetery

Dear Editor,

In 1741 John Hughson's Tavern, a drinking pub owned by a White man and serving mostly Black patrons, was a short distance from the Black burial ground discovered earlier this month in lower Manhattan and the conspiratorial center of the Great Negro Plot, an alleged slave conspiracy to burn down the city.

A city-wide investigation followed the series of mysterious fires and a roundup of dozens of enslaved Black suspects ensued. Hughson's Tavern was a secret meeting place, argued an 18th-century prosecutor, where the Black defendants conspired a "revolution" to take over the city.

The incriminating testimony of a White tavern barmaid, Mary Burton, a 16-year-old indentured servant, marked the fate of many of the suspects. Thirty-four people were convicted in the plot. Thirteen Black men were burned at the stake and 17 hanged. Two White women and two White men (Hughson included) were also hanged.

There is no known record of where the human remains were reposed, but a reasonable conclusion is that they all may be buried at the Negro cemetery.

Christopher Moore

(Mr. Moore is currently researching and writing a book on the history of colonial New York City.)

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Excavation Stirs Debate On Cemetery

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

Two months ago in lower Manhattan, just a few steps ahead of the bulldozers, archeologists working where a new Federal office tower is to rise began unearthing an 18th-century cemetery that had endured as one of the oldest vestiges of a black community in New York City.

Since then, the dig has grown to remarkable proportions: 93 skeletons have been found and there is the possibility that another 70 remains may await discovery.

That might add four months and \$6 million to the construction bill for the 34-story tower, and several prominent black New Yorkers expressed concern yesterday — based on conversations with archeologists and officials — that the Federal Government would speed up what has been a painstaking process.

Construction Is Second

But William J. Diamond, regional administrator of the General Services Administration, said last night, "There will be no speeding up that will endanger the artifacts in any way, shape or form.

"The construction will have to take second place," he said. "The dollars will not drive this project."

Earlier in the day, responding to a flurry of speculation that the excavation would be hastened, State Senator David A. Paterson, a Democrat who represents Harlem and the Upper West Side, said: "It's bad enough that some of the bodies that may be in those tombs were discriminated against in life. But now, they're being discriminated against in death."

The Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts 3d of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem said: "I would hope the Federal Government would retard the process a bit. There seems to be strong evidence that this burial ground might be evidence of a period of African-American history that's important."

First shown on a 1755 map of New York as the Negroes Burial Ground, the block bounded by Broadway and Duane, Reade and Elk Streets served as a cemetery for slaves and free



Lester Kallades/City of New York

Painstaking excavation of Negroes Burial Ground in Manhattan could delay work on an office tower by four months. Mayor David N. Dinkins visited the site between Reade and Duane Streets near Broadway.

blacks. It closed in 1790.

It is described by the Government as "the only Colonial-period African-American cemetery to be excavated in the United States."

Yesterday, John Rossi, the project manager of the office tower, said: "We're now in a position where the contractor is being held up. If we're still in the ground with the excavation of bodies approximately until April 15, we feel we'll be looking at an exposure of an additional \$6 million."

By using what he called the "coroner's method," Mr. Rossi said only

one day would be needed to clean a skeleton, remove it and place it in a box still surrounded by soil. It now takes three to five days to remove a skeleton, he said.

But Mr. Diamond said it would be "very premature" to speculate on what would happen at the final portion of the excavation site, although he acknowledged that spending would have to be kept "within reason."

"It's a balancing act," he said. "Will this add to our cultural and ethnic knowledge? If it does, we may have to take a loss."

U.S. Asks Faster Excavation At Black Cemetery of 1700's

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

Two months ago in lower Manhattan, and just a few steps ahead of the bulldozers, archaeologists working where a new Federal office tower is to rise began unearthing an 18th-century cemetery that had endured as one of the oldest vestiges of a black community in New York City.

At the time, Federal officials said archaeology at the Negroes Burial Ground (as it was called in 1755) would take precedence over building. But that was before the dig grew into remarkable proportions, with the possibility that at least 160 skeletal remains were in place.

Now, facing a four-month, \$6 million delay, the Government wants to end the painstaking excavation by dental pick and spoon, in favor of a faster approach with wide shovels.

'Coroner's Method'

Using what he called the "coroner's method," John Rossi, project manager for the 34-story Federal office tower, said yesterday that only one day would be needed to clean a skeleton, remove it and place it in a box still surrounded by soil. It now takes three to five days to remove a skeleton, he said.

But several prominent black New

Yorkers have called on the Government to allow the excavation to continue at a deliberate pace, given the site's historical importance and cultural significance.

"It's bad enough that some of the bodies that may be in those tombs were discriminated against in life," said State Senator David A. Paterson, a Democrat who represents Harlem and the Upper West Side. "But now, they're being discriminated against in death."

The Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts 3d of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem said: "I would hope the Federal Government would retard the process a bit. There seems to be strong evidence that this burial ground might be evidence of a period of African-American history that's important."

On Wednesday, Mayor David N. Dinkins visited the site. He has previously praised the Government for giving ample time to the archaeologists.

Mr. Rossi emphasized yesterday that no final decision had been made and that until a ruling came from

Continued on Page B4, Column 2

U.S. Urges Faster Excavation At Black Cemetery of 1700's

Continued From Page A1

Washington, "we are not going to deviate" from the archaeological method of excavation.

To date, 93 skeletons have been found on the block bounded by Broadway and Duane, Reade and Elk Streets. The locale served as a cemetery for black New Yorkers, as a potter's field and a Revolutionary War burial ground before it was closed in 1790. It is described by the Government as "the only Colonial period African-American cemetery to be excavated in the United States."

Officials of the General Services Administration estimated that there may be 70 more remains awaiting discovery and that if the same care were exercised in their removal, the delay might add some \$6 million to the ultimate construction bill.

"Certainly, the Government can't complain that it would be too much money when it spends \$86 for a screwdriver," Dr. Butts said.

Clad in Shrouds

Mayor Dinkins has "not been formally notified that there is any desire on the part of the Federal Government to accelerate the excavation," said Ruby Ryles, an assistant press secretary. But, she added, "If an accelerated excavation compromises the quality of the data; it is the desire of the Mayor that that not happen."

All the bodies found to date were buried in coffins, heads to the west, Mr.

October: 'The importance of the find comes first.'

Rossi said. All were clad in shrouds, which have long since disintegrated.

"These grave sites hold the remains of the ancestors of the people of Harlem," said Thom Bess, executive director of Landmarks Harlem, a private preservation group. "It's an important link with our past and everything must be done to keep the excavation going in as strong a way as possible."

"We don't intend to leave anyone behind," Mr. Rossi said.

Members of the archeological team could not be reached yesterday evening for comment, as they had already left the site.

When the announcement was made in October that the burial ground had been discovered, William J. Diamond, regional administrator of the General Services Administration, said the Government's instruction to Ed Rutsch, the chief archeologist, was that "the importance of the find comes first."

At the time, only 13 remains had been unearthed. "We're now in a position where the contractor is being held up," Mr. Rossi said. "If we're still in the ground with the excavation of bodies approximately until April 15, we feel we'll be looking at an exposure of an additional \$6 million."

CITY



Leslie Kallides/City of New York

The United States Government is in favor of quicker approach excavation of Negroes Burial Ground discovered in lower Manhattan. Mayor David N. Dinkins visited the site at Reade and Duane Street.

CONCERN OVER BURIAL GROUND

To insure that archeologists are not hurried in their excavation of an 18th-century burial ground for blacks in lower Manhattan, State Senator David A. Paterson said he would form a task force to monitor the project. Page 27.

THE NEW YORK TIMES **METRO** SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1991

Paterson to Monitor Dig at Burial Ground

To insure that archeologists not be hurried in digging an 18th-century burial ground for blacks in lower Manhattan, State Senator David A. Paterson said yesterday that he would form a team to monitor the work.

The cemetery, known in the 1750's as the Negroes Burial Ground, was discovered at a construction site on Broadway, between Duane and Reade Streets, where a 34-story Federal office tower is planned. More than 90 skeletal remains have been unearthed there since October and there may be dozens more.

Senator Paterson, a Democrat who represents Harlem and the Upper West Side, had expressed fear that the Government would put economy ahead of archeology. Construction delays from a painstaking dig may cost up to \$6 million.

The New York Times reported in some editions yesterday that the project manager, John Rossi, was considering quicker excavation. But after learning of the article, the regional administrator of the General Services Administration, William J. Diamond, said on Thursday night, "There will be no speeding up that will endanger the artifacts."

While acknowledging that assurance, Mr. Paterson said he would nonetheless gather preservationists,

elected officials and concerned citizens to keep watch on the dig.

Mr. Diamond said yesterday, "We welcome any and all serious oversight, as we will go to all appropriate lengths to assure the community that their ethnic and social heritage is being well protected."

Senator Paterson said he would take Mr. Diamond's word that it was now his intention to give archeologists first priority. "But I'm not assured that this was the original intention," he said.

Unfree, Unknown

Buried Slaves Near City Hall

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

After what mean years they had on earth — enslaved, impoverished and ostracized — black New Yorkers in the 18th century were consigned to a desolate graveyard beyond the city walls. The next light they were to see was the rising sun on Judgment Day.

Archeologists got there first. Since October, more than 100 skeletons have been discovered, intricately measured and delicately removed from the land just north of City Hall that was known in the 1700's as the Negroes Burial Ground. With each coffin, a bridge is being built back to a people whose history was all but ignored for more than two centuries.

"My God, how things have changed," Mayor David N. Dinkins recalled thinking to himself as he

visited the graveyard earlier this month. "Negroes were buried there because that was without the city. Here I stood, the first African-American mayor of the City of New York, examining the place where I would have had to have been buried. I couldn't have been buried in the city."

Today, the locale is at the heart of the civic center. Archeologists have been working in a pit more than 20 feet below street level, under a roof of translucent plastic sheets, surrounded by the rumbling tumult of backhoes excavating the site. A 34-story Federal office tower is to rise on the block, bounded by Broadway and Duane, Reade and Elk Streets.

Site Again Overshadowed

Recently, the archeology was overshadowed by fears about City Planning Department headquarters, at 22 Reade Street, which adjoins the site and has settled because of underpinnings being dug beneath its foundation. (The structure has been deemed "safe for occupancy" and "not in danger of collapse" by the executive engineer of the city's Buildings Department, David Sobel.)

Barring some catastrophe, however, the archeological dig is what is most likely to be remembered.

"We will never look at colonial times and African-American history again in the same way," said Laurie Beckelman, chairwoman of the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission. "This will add so much to our cultural heritage."

Perhaps most telling is what the archeologists have not found: worldly goods of almost any kind.

Buttons, and Maybe Flowers

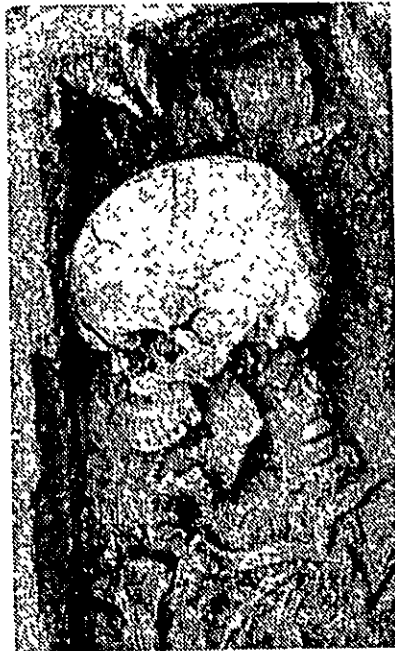
"One brass finger ring was the only example of any possession that went into the grave," said Michael Parrington, an archeologist who leads the cemetery team under the direction of Edward S. Rutsch.

"These people came into the world with nothing and certainly took very little out," Mr. Parrington said. Military buttons were found in two cof-



Photographs by Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

Charlane Gross at a gravesite just north of City Hall that was known in the 1700's as Negroes Burial Ground.



One of the 100 skeletons found in the 18th-century graveyard for black New Yorkers.

ins. Three coffins contained what may have been flowers.

All the bodies were buried with their heads to the west, allowing them to sit up and face the rising sun on Judgment Day, Mr. Parrington said.

Twenty-seven infants have been found. Many died before the age of 6 months and were buried in coffins 12 to 18 inches long. Fifteen older children have also been found.

Of the adults whose sex could be determined, 20 were men and 14 were women. About 90 percent of the people were black, Ms. Beckelman said.

"Most adults had died in their 30's but had dental profiles of people in their 90's," Ms. Beckelman said, un-

derscoring how short and stressful their lives had been.

A number of people suffered from rickets, arthritis and syphilis. But archeologists have not found any broken bones. "That may be an indication that there wasn't much violence among this community," Mr. Parrington said. One person, however, had a musket ball in the rib area.

Nothing would seem connected to the "Negro Plot" of 1741, in which white New Yorkers, imagining a conspiracy among the slaves, hanged or burned dozens of people.

Mr. Parrington said those who were executed may have been buried elsewhere in the cemetery, which

might have contained 10,000 bodies when it was closed in 1790. Much was dug up in the 19th century.

Based on the density of the burials found so far, Mr. Parrington said an unexplored part of the site might contain 25 or 30 more bodies.

William J. Diamond, the regional administrator of the General Services Administration, which is overseeing development of the office tower, has promised that the archeological work will not be hastened, even if it means a delay in construction. Nonetheless, State Senator David A. Paterson of Manhattan is assembling a task force to monitor the dig.

George F. Will

Stories From the Earth

NEW YORK—Rome's subway was not built in a day. Excavators frequently found antiquities—an ancient bath, a pope's toothbrush—and archaeologists swarmed in to sift and sort.

Intuition says America is too young to have urban archaeology. A swarm of students and archaeologists, wearing sweatshirts, jeans and some of the damp clay in which they are carefully digging, says otherwise. They are doing "salvage archaeology" at a construction site on Manhattan's Lower East Side in an 18th-century graveyard built over long ago.

More than 90 bodies have been found, all buried with their heads to the west so they will face the Savior when he comes from the east on Judgment Day. Before the cemetery was closed in 1790, it was a burial ground for blacks and a potter's field. About 1,500 American POWs were held by the British nearby, most of them from the battle of Long Island, and perhaps 800 died of disease.

The skeletons are disproportionately of women, infants and children, which suggests the distribution of the hazards of 18th century life. From the evidence of teeth and bones, forensic archaeologists can learn much about life back then, concerning nutrition and common traumas. Among the thousands of human remains that may be here, perhaps are those of the blacks executed for various "conspiracies"—executed by burning at the stake or hanged and left to rot in public.

A few blocks away another construction site is rich with remnants of the most savage side of the 19th century city. Beginning around 1820, Five Points was a dark mecca, perhaps the world's most notorious slum, attracting the curious by the stench of its reputation.

When Lincoln came to the city in 1860 to deliver his Cooper Institute address, he asked to see two things, Plymouth Church in Brooklyn where Henry Ward Beecher delivered anti-slavery sermons, and Five Points. Charles Dickens had considered it at

Archaeology reveals our evolving sense of decency.

least as repellent as Oliver Twist's London. Five Points was among the places Jacob Riis wrote about in the book whose title put a phrase in the American language: "How the Other Half Lives."

How, indeed, did they live in Five Points? Nastily, brutishly and often briefly. When, after the 1832 cholera epidemic, the mayor ordered the streets scraped of animal and human filth, a lady who had lived all her life in the city exclaimed about the uncovered pavement, "I never knew the streets were covered with stones." In the 1849 epidemic, pigs rooting in the streets were, a report said, "contaminated by the contact of the children." It was said that in death the victims continued the tenement system, buried six tiers deep.

Most Five Points buildings, the rubble from which is now 15 to 20 feet below street level, contained a saloon. The police raided one in which 42 customers were crammed into one small room, in the corner of which on a pile of dirty straw lay a woman just delivered of a child.

For years police rarely ventured into Five Points, and only in force, showing a prudent

regard for the famous gangs: the Shurt Tails, Roach Guard, Plug Uglies and Dead Rabbits. These gangs, and the unorganized rabble of Five Points, fueled the riots of July 1863.

They began as draft riots, became race riots, then turned to pillaging the rich. Regular army units fought, often house-to-house, to restore order. At least 2,000 New Yorkers were killed. (Two comparisons: Forty-three died in the Detroit riot of 1967. Thirteen of Andrew Jackson's soldiers were killed at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815.)

Eventually the problem of Five Points was solved the way America often cures its slums, by building over it. One of the great 19th-century buildings in the area is the Tweed Court House which (another national tradition) became the Mother Of All Cost Overruns. It was supposed to cost \$250,000. It cost at least 30 times that—not counting the 50,000 brooms and 23 acres of carpets ordered for the building from politically correct broom and carpet makers. From the Plug Uglies to the Tweed Ring, the evolution of the neighborhood was from violent to government crime.

As 1991 sags to a close with a mood of depression in the nation, "salvage archaeology" can serve America's sense of perspective. As this city's life today shows at every turn, society's evolving sense of decency has a long way to go. But it has been worse.

Furthermore, such archaeology gives to us, in our no-longer-quite-so-New World, the useful sense we get when we first set foot in the Old World: How many footsteps have fallen here, how heavy and dense our history is, and how large and swarming and stirring is the story of which all of us are but small passing parts.

WASHINGTON POST

12/29/91

Unearthing ancestors' history buried in Lower Manhattan

Sen. Paterson leads task force on burial ground

By J. ZAMGBA BROWNE
Amsterdam News Staff

A plan by the federal government to erect a 34-story office building in Manhattan over the bones of scores of Blacks who were buried in the area between the 17th and 18th centuries, has infuriated a number of historians, archaeologists, religious leaders and politicians.

State Senator David Paterson has already spearheaded the formation of a special task force to battle the administration over the project now under way at Broadway and Duane St. near 26 Federal Plaza and a stone's throw from City Hall.

The senator said an ecumenical service has been planned for noon Feb. 21 at the site to memorialize the deceased as well as to draw public attention to the fact that the city knew the area was a burial ground but decided to go ahead with the project.

"We first thought there were about 2,000 bodies buried at the site, but researchers now tell us the figure is ten times greater," said Senator Paterson who represents Central Harlem. The area in question according to historians was technically north of the New York City line in the 18th century.

During this period, Blacks were not allowed to be buried in the city. Paterson said attempts by the government to dig up the bodies and not give archaeologists a chance to inspect the site shows that the souls of "our ancestors are experiencing bias in death similar to the treatment they received while alive."

Paterson described the discovery of the bodies as one of the largest and most unique findings, one that has archaeologists and anthropologists in an uproar over the fact it took three years for the General Services Administration

to define the scientific method being used to unearth the remains.

Paterson said attention was only given to a group of religious leaders from the Bronx, and his office began to speak up and formed a task force. He said the group is now working to raise funds to film and document the procedures being used to dig up the remains. Plans are also underway to hold appropriate ceremonies to honor the ancestors, he added.

Because the government wants to rush the project, Paterson charged that it is not taking the extra time to excavate the remains properly. He explained that there are two ways to dig up bodies:

One is to follow a similar procedure used by the coroner; the other is the scientific method, which involves conducting tests to determine the age of the deceased as well as brushing the body to find out the cause of death.

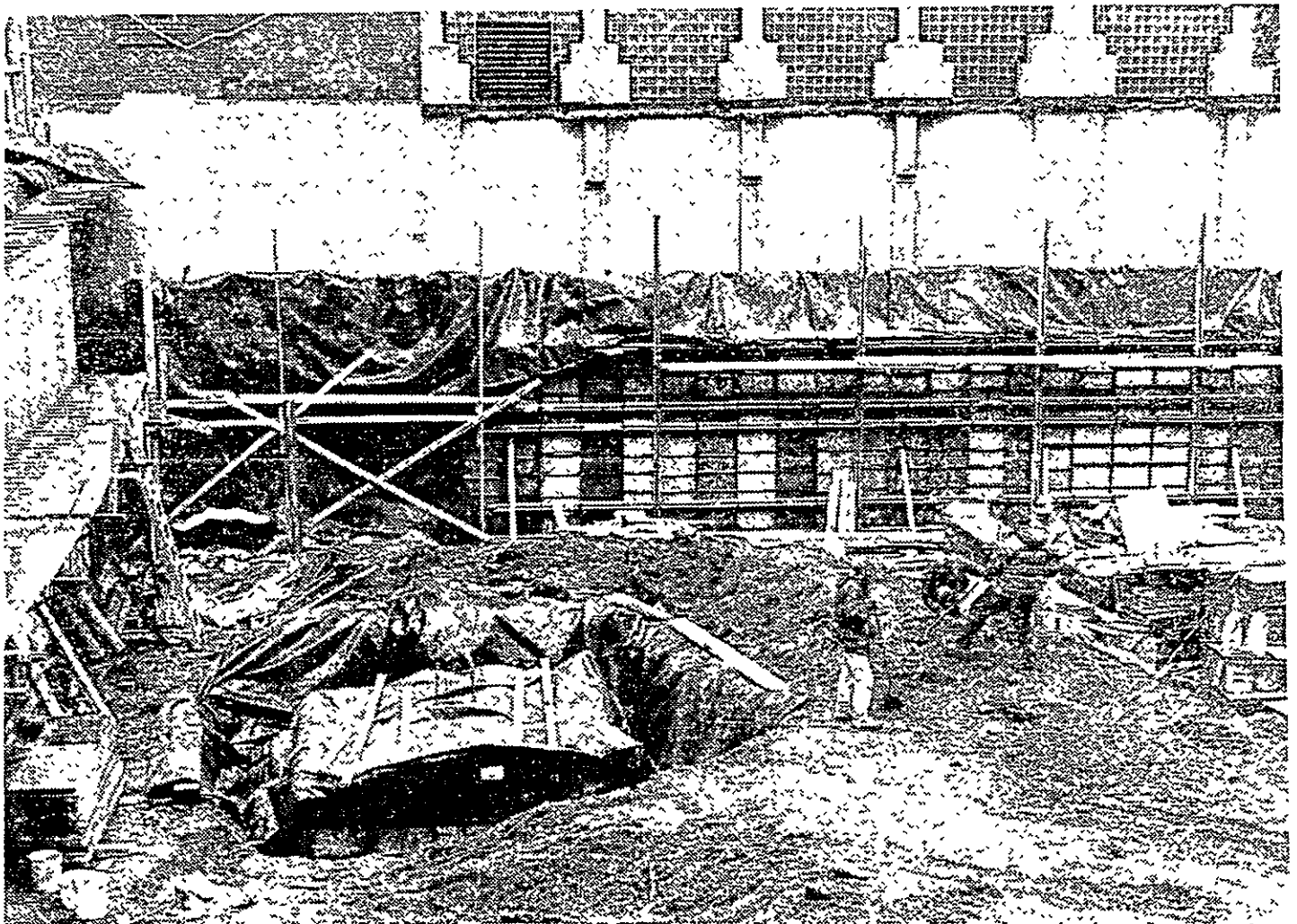
Senator Paterson charged that there is a deliberate attempt by the federal government to destroy Black history, but his task force, which is made up of activists, historians, the clergy, educators and grassroots folks, wouldn't allow this to happen.

"We are interested in preserving one of the few indicators of what our history was two centuries ago," Senator Paterson declared in a telephone interview.

The Metro Section

The New York Times

2/21/92



Construction Workers Uproot Graves in Colonial-Era Black Cemetery

As many as 20 graves in a cemetery for blacks have been uprooted by construction workers despite assurances by Federal officials that the lower Manhattan site would be spared destruction. Archeologists assessed the damage on Saturday. Page B3.

Mistake Disturbs Graves At Black Burial Ground

Despite Promises, Workers Unearth Bones

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

As many as 20 graves in a colonial-era cemetery for black New Yorkers have been uprooted by construction workers, notwithstanding repeated assurances by Federal officials that this critical archeological site in lower Manhattan would be spared such destruction.

A new 34-story Federal Building is to rise on a portion of the cemetery, bounded by Broadway and Elk, Reade and Duane Streets, where graves had survived undisturbed since the 1700's. The regional administrator of the General Services Administration, William J. Diamond, has said repeatedly that construction would take second place to careful archeological excavation and that no remains or artifacts would be endangered.

Yet on Feb. 14, earth was scooped up and a concrete footing poured on the east side of the site, where as many as 20 graves might have been, according to New York City's official archeologist, Daniel N. Pagano.

Mr. Pagano said jaw bones, leg bones and arm bones were among the remains scooped up by the backhoe.

Mayor Expresses Distress

Mayor David N. Dinkins was described last night by an assistant press secretary, Ruby Ryles, as "exceedingly distressed that, despite a memorandum of agreement that protected the area, 20 burials have been destroyed."

The project executive for the General Services Administration, Alan L. Greenberg, said yesterday: "We are still 100 percent committed to a dignified removal. This was completely unforeseen. We regret it, but it doesn't change any of Mr. Diamond's previous commitments."

"Upon discovering they were bringing up bones, all work stopped in the area," he said, "and it will not resume until they can test the whole area with the archeologists' supervision."

Mr. Greenberg said the construction crew had relied on an out-of-date drawing to gauge which part of the site was deemed "culturally sterile" — that is, unlikely to yield remains or artifacts — by archeologists working on the excavation.

An amended drawing, made after

the archeologists had conducted further investigations, showed the limits of the "sterile" area more precisely, but never got to the field office. Mr. Greenberg blamed this on a "simple human error or miscommunication."

Entrance to Site Denied

The chairwoman of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, Laurie Beckelman, said the incident demonstrated the need for the city government "to play a very important role in monitoring how life bodies are exhumed."

Mr. Pagano, who works for the landmarks commission, tried to visit the site last Friday afternoon, but was denied entry. Mr. Greenberg said that was "purely and simply a safety issue" that had "nothing to do" with the construction work. He said it ap-

The backhoes were guided by an vague map of the colonial cemetery.

peared that only two or three graves had been disturbed.

Historians had long known of the Negroes Burial Ground, as it was called in the 18th century, but it was not explored archeologically until last September, when excavation began for the new Federal Building. To date, 199 graves have been found, Mr. Greenberg said, and the area now under exploration may yield as many as 100 more.

In December, the Government was thinking about hastening the excavation so it could begin construction earlier. When news of that became public, Mr. Diamond instead renewed his commitment to a deliberate, painstaking archeological endeavor.

However, State Senator David A. Paterson, a Democrat who represents Harlem and the Upper West Side, felt compelled to form a task force to monitor the status of the dig. Members of that task force were the first to disclose news of the unauthorized excavation yesterday.

'Goof' Uproots Graves

By Michael H. Cottman

STAFF WRITER

At least 20 graves in an 18th Century cemetery for black New Yorkers were accidentally uprooted by construction workers even though city and federal officials had worked out a plan for the archeological site to be treated with care.

Mayor David N. Dinkins, who has taken particular interest in seeing that the site is preserved, said he was told the contractors "just goofed."

The Negroes Burial Ground is bounded by Broadway and Elk, Reade and Duane Streets in lower Manhattan, where the graves have gone untouched since the 1700s.

A 34-story Federal Building is to be constructed on part of the burial ground but William J. Diamond, the regional administrator for the General Services Administration, has repeatedly said that no remains or artifacts would be damaged.

Historians have been aware of the burial

ground for years, but it was not explored until last year when excavation began for the new Federal Building. So far, 199 graves have been found.

On Feb. 14, however, jaw bones, leg bones and arm bones were pulled from the earth, city officials said, where about 20 graves might have been.

Dinkins met with Diamond yesterday to discuss the mistake and they plan to meet again next week, Leland T. Jones, the mayor's press secretary, said.

"I am very, very distressed," Dinkins said yesterday at City Hall. "I had a personal direct commitment from Bill Diamond that this would be handled in the appropriate fashion, that they would slow down the process so to be careful. And the reason why this is so important is that this is history out there."

Dinkins added: "I am told . . . that this was a genuine mistake and they just goofed. For the moment I accept that, but I want to see to it that appropriate safeguards are put in place."

Coffins Plundered At Black Cemetery

Apparently unmindful that they were plundering the coffins of slaves and desperately poor freemen, grave robbers invaded a colonial-era black cemetery in lower Manhattan Friday night or Saturday morning, the Federal official in charge of the site said.

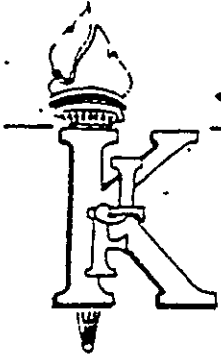
Their yield: a number of teeth. But several skulls were damaged.

Six graves were disturbed at the Negros Burial Ground, said William J. Diamond, regional administrator of the General Services Administration, which is developing an office building on the site, between Broadway and Elk, Duane and Reade Streets. He said there were "no gold teeth, gold buttons, coins or anything of dollar value" on the site.

Last month a backhoe accidentally uprooted a half-dozen graves at the cemetery, the site of an archeological dig since September.

Mr. Diamond said one of the two guards on the night shift went home sick Friday. He said he has ordered a third guard assigned for the dig.

SPEAKERS NEEDED



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Archaeologist Sought for

Landmark Cemetery Restoration

The Richard Cornell Graveyard, located in Far Rockaway, N.Y., was designated a New York City landmark in 1970. The cemetery, dating back to the 1690s, and measuring 75'x67', is a repository of twenty-nine Cornell family members and descendants, including Revolutionary War and War of 1812 veterans.

The cemetery, largely neglected and used as a dumping ground for several decades, is a focus of deep concern of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Cornell Cemetery Corporation, a not-for-profit group dedicated to the cemetery's restoration.

Archeological work and supervision is needed for digging, since it is believed that cemetery material and artifacts are buried beneath the surface. *preparation of a scope of work & research design prior to (field testing)*

We are looking for a pro bono archeologist, sufficiently motivated by interest in the project to donate his or her services.

Please contact Stanley Cogan, (718) 224-9592.

3/92

Help bring the Cornell Cemetery back to life!

THE MUNICIPAL ART SOCIETY

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P R O G R A M S

EVENING PROGRAMS ON CURRENT ISSUES

Wednesday, May 13
Archaeology in and of the City of New York
(Co-sponsored with the Municipal Art Society Fellows)
An exploration of the future of the city's underground past with slides of current archaeological excavations of Old New York. Speakers include archaeologist Cece Krikorian, Daniel Pagano of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Fred Winter of Brooklyn College and Dr. Joan Geismar.

*Evening programs begin at 6 pm
Members \$3, others \$5, unless otherwise noted. Reservations required.*

Two proposed amendments to the PANYC By-Laws are as follows.

Please read. There will be a vote on these proposals at the next PANYC meeting (3/25/92).

(1) The PANYC membership application will include a request for a statement of interest. To read as:

E. Applicants should submit a statement of purpose that includes their interest in New York City archaeology. Members of PANYC have a commitment to protect and preserve the city's archaeological resources and to support research and encourage publication of information recovered from this research. Members will not engage in illegal or unethical conduct involving archaeological matters. In applying for membership it is expected that an individual is in agreement with these goals. PANYC is not an accrediting organization for archaeologists. such.

(2) In order to provide a mechanism for filling a vacancy on the Executive Board, the following proposal has been made.

If a vacancy occurs among the Officers of the Executive Board (due to death, illness, move, etc.), the President may appoint, with the approval of the Board, a replacement to complete the unexpired term.