

Remains being studied

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Aurora Museum

When the Aurora Cemetery was established in 1869, remains from the Trinity Church graveyard, and all other church or private graveyards, were to have been exhumed and re-interred at the new site.

"We know not everybody did that, though families were encouraged to remove the remains and the stones to the new location," Stuart said. "There were burials at the churchyard from the 1840s, so by 1869 some had moved away, it must have been difficult to contact all the next-of-kin."

"The name Mary Hacking does appear on a stone at the Aurora Cemetery, but she was buried at the Anglican church and there's a stone there as well," she said. "It seems she was properly memorialized by her family at the Aurora Cemetery, but I do think it might be her bones that were (in the churchyard). Maybe her children decided to leave her there. Her stone is still there and I believe her remains were still there."

Stuart said it was impossible to determine how many bodies may still be buried in the churchyard.

Construction of an addition to Trinity Church, which will include a new, bigger church attached to the old parish hall, a Christian education centre, choir rooms

and space for the church's Helping Hands program, led to the unearthing of the unknown graveyard.

As workers dug foundations Wednesday, the dirt was hauled to the Aurora Road-Dufferin Street site, owned by the Mitchell Brothers.

As the fill was being dumped from the truck, workers spied the skulls and other bones.

"I guess stuff like that happens," said Bob Mitchell, who along with brothers Hugh and Mark, are starting up a chicken farm on the lot. "It seems no one really knew about it."

"It certainly came as a shock to us," said Trinity Church Reverend Philip Poole. "There were no records and this hasn't been an active cemetery for more than 100 years."

Construction at the church has been halted while investigators, including staff from the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, cemeteries regulations section, look for more remains.

"They will instruct us as to the protocol in a situation like this," Poole said. "This project is on hold until we get those instructions."

Ministry spokesperson Carol-Lynn Leopard said an archaeologist will conduct an investigation to determine if the site is irregular (remains that were supposed to be moved were missed), an illegal cemetery or an unofficial aboriginal burial ground.



STAFF PHOTO/ROB ALARY

Det.-Sgt. Denis Mulholland, head of the York Regional Police homicide squad, surveys a construction site at Trinity Anglican Church in Aurora where pioneer bones were unearthed. (Left) A skull discovered at a King Township site where fill from the churchyard was dumped Wednesday.



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