

Remains found during work at Mission

By MARY SCHLEY

A CONTRACTOR unearthed human remains while trenching for electrical equipment at the edge of a cemetery at Carmel Mission May 4, planning director Brandon Swanson and an official from the Diocese of Monterey confirmed this week. The bones were re-buried during a ceremony with representatives of several regional Native American tribes less than 48 hours later.

For the past several weeks, construction crews have been working on a restoration project in the forecourt of the historic Mission Basilica to seismically retrofit the Sir Harry Downie Museum, install new drainage and electrical equipment, build two new restrooms, refurbish the fountain, re-landscape the gardens and replace a broken section of wall that was taken out for safety reasons last year. The work is being funded by donations raised by the nonprofit Carmel Mission Foundation.

Because the Mission complex is hundreds of years old and includes some of California's most historic buildings, any work done there carries with it a litany of requirements and conditions, including that a "qualified archaeologist and appropriately qualified Native American monitor shall be present onsite to monitor all earth-moving activities."

They were at the Mission when the bones were found earlier this month, Swanson said. Kelly Hathorn of Hathaway Dinwiddie Construction Company, which is handling the project, told him.

"Upon discovery, the tribal monitor and archaeological monitor who were

there in accordance with the city's conditions of approval stopped work in this area immediately," Swanson said, and the contractor told building official Jermel Laurie about the remains while he was there for an inspection that afternoon.

Reburial ceremony

Also according to law, when remains are found, the Monterey County Coroner's Office must be notified within 24 hours, and Swanson said the tribal monitor handled that task, according to the contractor's report.

"Regional tribes and the Native American Heritage Commission were also notified within 24 hours by the Mission," Swanson said, and "a reburial ceremony which included representatives from regional tribes took place on May 6."

Jewel Gentry, California Missions director for the Diocese of Monterey, said the bones were uncovered on the edge of a cemetery in the forecourt, and that four tribes participated in the ceremony for their reinterment on that Thursday morning.



PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

Workers in the Mission courtyard during the current phase of renovations.