

FLS  
NOV 4  
2011



WINNER VONKNER / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

The Rev. Charles Sydnor conducts a burial service before a casket containing skeletal remains dating from the 18th century that were found in June 2001 at Market Square in downtown Fredericksburg.

# Churchyard offers final rest

## 18th-century remains are reinterred at St. George's

By JESSICA ALLEN  
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

In celebration of All Saints' Day, which honors all those who have departed in the Christian faith, St. George's Episcopal Church yesterday welcomed home six nameless citizens.

More than 40 people attended the church's burial service for the 18th-century skeletal remains of three men, two women and a teenage boy unearthed last year.

The last burial in the church's cemetery on Princess Anne Street was in 1924—more than 75 years ago.

"It seems appropriate to have the burial on the celebration of All Saints' Day, because we have a mystical connection to those who have died," said the Rev. Charles Sydnor, rector of St. George's.

Archaeologists from Mary Washington College's Center for Historic Preservation uncovered the bones during a dig

'It seems appropriate to have the burial on the celebration of All Saints' Day, because we have a mystical connection to those who have died.'

**The Rev. Charles Sydnor**  
St. George's Episcopal Church

beside the church in Fredericksburg's Market Square in June 2001.

During the 20-minute service, which began at noon, Sydnor read from an original 1690 Anglican Prayer Book and recited the prayer "An Office for the

Burial of the Dead" in Elizabethan English.

But Sydnor was not the only one who created a Colonial atmosphere yesterday.

Seven members of the Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society dressed for the occasion.

"To honor their memory, we dressed in the time period," said society President Trip Wiggins.

Wiggins, who is also the junior warden at St. George's, said it was to make the deceased feel at home.

Many church members agreed that the lost remains were now reunited with the church.

"They've come back home," said Catherine Hicks of Fredericksburg.

Hicks said the burial service completed the church's All Saints' Day celebrations: St. George's had held six bap-

## BURIAL: St. George's Episcopal Church reinters 18th-century residents' remains

FROM PAGE A1

tisms earlier in the day.

"It is not only a day to remember those who died, but also a day of celebration—reminding us to strive to be saints in the way we live," she said.

St. George's is the oldest congregation in Fredericksburg, dating to the 1700s, Wiggins said.

At the time, most residents were buried in the church's cemetery—the first was John Jones in 1752.

The original church cemetery also included a section of what later became Market Square.

St. George's cemetery eventually was moved in 1959 to its current location on Princess Anne Street to make room for the church's McGuire Hall, an educational wing with classrooms.

But years before that, a wall had been built around what were thought to be all of the graves. Since the ones found last year were unmarked, it's likely they were left out when the rest were moved.

Archaeologist Josh Duncan, who supervised the MWC team, said he would have preferred that the bodies not be disturbed, but said it was unavoidable.

"I don't regret excavating them because the area was going to be turned into a park," he said.

The reburial, however, was handled well because the church, the Fredericksburg Area Museum—which adjoins Market

Square—and the city Department of Public Works worked together, Duncan said. The museum and the city, which owns the site, financed the \$500,000 excavation and Market Square restoration.

The six people's remains were placed in a single wooden casket, with white roses on top.

---

'It is not only a day  
to remember those who died,  
but also a day of celebration—  
reminding us to strive to be  
saints in the way we live.'

**Catherine Hicks**  
Church member

The coffin was lowered into the ground after yesterday's service.

A headstone will be placed in the new plot, but no decision has been made as to how its inscription will read, Wiggins said.

But after 300 years and two burial sites, the nameless citizens have found a final resting place.

Or as Sydnor, quoting 1 Corinthians 15:26 during the service, put it: "The last enemy to be destroyed is death."



Church member Ellie Carey, 9, looks toward the casket during yesterday's burial service at St. George's Episcopal Church in downtown Fredericksburg. The ceremony was held for the Colonial-era remains of three men, two women and a teenage boy reinterred in a plot on Princess Anne Street.

BYRONA VANOVER / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

# Church to give Market Square burials new home

■ Remains of 18th-century residents to be reburied on All Saints Day at St. George's in the city.

By ELIZABETH PEZZULLO  
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Six nearly complete 18th-century skeletons, unearthed last year behind the Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center, will get a proper reburial Sunday at St. George's Episcopal Church.

Archaeologists from Mary Washington College's Center for Historic Preservation uncovered the bones during a dig next to the church in Fredericksburg's Market Square in June 2001.

Scientific study determined that the remains are three men, two women and a teenage boy. Little else is known about them. Church

records that might have offered some clues were moved to Richmond for safekeeping during the Civil War. But the documents were destroyed.

The burial service will start at noon at the church on Princess Anne Street, and is open to the public. It's appropriate timing—Sunday happens to be All Saints Day.

"That's when we remember all those departed in the faith," said the Rev. Charles Sydnor, rector of St. George's.

The remains have been placed into a single casket, which will be buried in the church cemetery following the service.

Skulls, pelvises, and broken foot bones began to emerge as archaeologists painstakingly brushed the powdery dirt from the surface.

The discovery of the bones was



See **BURIAL**, Page A5

MWC archaeologist Emily Lindtsveit excavates one of the burials.

FILE / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Oct 29 2002

## From the front page

# BURIAL: Episcopal Church will reinter 18th-century residents

FROM PAGE A1

a surprise to the team of archaeologists, even knowing that St. George's original cemetery once spilled over into Market Square.

"We figured we might find some bones, but we were shocked to find fully articulated skeletons," said Josh Duncan, who led the archaeological team.

After careful removal, the bones were sent to Radford University and analyzed by osteologists, or bone specialists.

The team there determined that all the bones were those of Caucasians.

The scientists estimate that one of the men was over 45 when he died, another was between 30 and 40 years old, another probably didn't live beyond 35. The male teenager was between 14 and 16 years old when he died. One of the women is believed to be over 40 years old when she died and another died somewhere between 25 and 35 years old.

"For then, that was a pretty good age to live to," Duncan said.

How the adults died is unknown, but marks and scrapes on the bones of the teenage boy indicate he likely died from a debilitating disease.

"The teenager was in the worst shape," Duncan said. "The pock marks on his bones were similar to those left by tuberculosis or rickets."

The remains revealed some details about their lives. All suffered from bad teeth. It appears they did intense manual labor, evidenced by robust ligaments attached to bone, Duncan said.

All were buried facing east, typical of a Christian burial of the time, and each was placed in separate coffins, which eventually rotted away.

Hand-wrought nails found helped place the victims in the 18th century.

Other artifacts found among the bones were pins used to fasten cloth shrouds used to wrap the bodies at burial. A brass wedding band was still on the finger of one of the women.

Why the remains were not included in the church cemetery is unclear.

The original cemetery at St. George's was moved in 1959 to its current location to make room for the church's McGuire Hall.

Long before that, however, a wall was built around what was thought to be all the graves. Since the ones found last year were unmarked, it's likely they were just left out when the rest were moved.

Sydnor said a new headstone will be affixed to the plot containing the remains.

Also apropos to the occasion, Sydnor will use an original prayer book printed in the 1690s for the burial service.

The prayer he'll recite is called "An Office for the Burial of the Dead." Though they will not be read, other unusual offerings in the weathered book include: "A Prayer for Madmen," and "A Prayer on Behalf of Heretics and Seduced Persons."

Sydnor will read from the book written in Elizabethan English.

"It's really not that hard," he said. "You just have to remember that in those days all the s's were printed as f's."

Other items found during the excavation last year include animal bones—which will be sent off for further analysis—ceramics and remnant of the market stalls.

"This is one of the most significant market squares on the East Coast," Duncan said. "We should be able to learn a lot about who shopped there and what it was used for. And the burial is a nice way to end the project."