

Local news

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Historic Commission opposes moving graves

Cemeteries
By ROBERT GAMMON
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SANTA CRUZ — The county Historic Resources Commission has joined the battle against the Catholic Church's plans to move graves at an Aptos cemetery.

Commission Chairman Michael Bethke said Tuesday the commission has sided with parishioners opposing the church's plans because Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cemetery, better known as Calvary Cemetery, is a historic landmark.

"Some founding fathers, Native Americans and early Spanish settlers are buried there," Bethke said.

The commission sent a letter to the Monterey Archdiocese earlier this month, claiming the plan to relocate human remains at the Resurrection Church cemetery violates environmental laws.

The commission maintains that because

the state recognized the site in 1988 as having historical and cultural significance, the church may have to conduct an environmental impact report before moving graves.

But Michael Masuda, a Monterey attorney for the archdiocese, said Tuesday that he's not sure whether the California Environmental Quality Act applies to his client's project.

The \$1.5 million design calls for having the graves moved professionally to another part of the property at Soquel and State Park drives to make room for a new church building.

The archdiocese has said it desperately needs a new church, because the current one is in ill repair and because it originally was designed as a meeting hall.

Several families in the 750-family parish also have been fighting the project be-

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cause they object to having their loved ones' graves disturbed.

Mary Ellen Kettler, who has opposed the project since she learned of the church's plans earlier this year, said when she buried her mother in the cemetery in 1977, she thought her mom would be allowed to rest in peace forever.

But the 68-year-old Santa Cruzan said she's not just upset about her mother being moved for a new building, she said she's worried that if the church has its

way, it will happen again.

"What's to stop them 10 years from now from doing the same thing all over again at Holy Cross Cemetery?" she asked, referring to the historic cemetery off Mission Street in Santa Cruz.

The colorful history of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, across from Rancho del Mar shopping center, dates back to the mid 1800s. Aptos' founding father, Rafael Castro, gave the land to the archdiocese in 1868.

He and several of his family members were buried there as well as several members of the Arano family, including Jose, who was Aptos' first postmaster.

Also in the nearly 200 graves are remains from an Indian burial site that were moved from Rio del Mar in 1870 to make room for a hotel built by Claus Spreckels.

Among the other famous locals buried at Mount Carmel is Hall of Fame baseball player Harry "the Cat" Hooper of the Boston Red Sox, who died in 1974.

Archdiocese attorney Masuda said the church hopes to get approval from all families who have relatives buried in the cemetery before moving graves.

In July, the church filed a petition in Santa Cruz County Superior Court, saying it planned to notify families by mail of its plans and publish notices in the Sentinel.