

Indian burial site found near mission

SANTA CRUZ — An ancient Indian burial site Indian on Mission Hill remains intact today thanks to the sharp eye of a PG&E worker and the efforts of local archaeologists and Native Americans.

PG&E's Steve Chambers was working in the street in front of Holy Cross Church Monday afternoon, fixing a leaking gas line in a four-foot-deep hole, when he noticed a large bone in one corner of the hole. Within a short while local archaeologists and Native Americans were notified of the discovery.

On Tuesday afternoon a group of archaeologists, Native Americans and PG&E workers gathered around the hole as Salinas archaeologist Trudi Haversat re-excavated the bone. She determined that it was a leg bone and that there was a good chance that an entire body was buried at the site.

The site was then covered and sealed according to the wishes of Native Americans present. "If we can preserve the graves, then we'd rather leave discovered burials where they're at than move them," said Ohlone Indian Irene Avalos.

According to archaeologist Charlotte Smith of Cabrillo College, the area east of the church has been known to be an Indian burial ground for some time, but this discovery was the first in front of the church.

"It's definitely out of the bounds of where you would expect a burial to be," she said.

"It's the first time up on Mission Hill that we've had an isolated burial," said Cabrillo archaeologist Rob Edwards. "It gives us some information we didn't have before."

"It also means that we should be a little more careful about whatever happens up on Mission Hill," Edwards said.