



Purpose of dig in Aptos Village is to see if detritus from past is of archeological value.

Research diggers screen leftovers from yesterday

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An archeological dig conducted Tuesday and Wednesday on three parcels west of the Bayview Hotel in Aptos Village has turned up evidence of prehistoric artifacts and cultural remains of later settlements — but the value of the material is questionable, according to archeologist Gary S. Breschini, project director.

Breschini and a team of archeologists were hired to conduct secondary tests on the site for the proposed Aptos Station Development. The parcels include foundation remains and site locations of an old freight house and the Aptos Depot, both constructed before 1880. There are also the sites of another freight building and tool shed that had been built before 1929.

The work of the

archeological team attracted considerable attention Tuesday, and Breschini said the site was visited by the class of Cabrillo College archeology instructor Rob Edwards, who also runs the regional office of the State Archeological Site Survey.

Breschini added that Edwards is also familiar with the entire archeological team, since each of the eight members — including the project leader — have taken courses or participated in the program at Cabrillo.

The project site combines three separate but adjacent parcels to avoid duplication of research, and to keep the total cost to developers as low as possible, Breschini said. The proposed development plans call for a small shopping center to be built on a parcel of about 2.5 acres in the area between the railroad tracks

and Hopkins Road.

Purpose of the archeological dig is to find out whether these are "significant," cultural remains or evidence related to a prehistoric site. The workers have found scrapers, cutting implements and some food remains, he said, but so far none of the material is of great value.

"The key word is 'significant', because if the findings are of no real value, then we can't put the developers to any added inconvenience to try and save them," Breschini said, "But if it is significant, then the inconvenience is justified."

Significance is determined by whether the material provides information that cannot be obtained elsewhere. If important artifacts relating to the railroad era and the logging industry were found, for example, the information

could be of valuable historic interest. If an Indian site is discovered, it might provide much-needed data about the native peoples of the Aptos area, and could be of immense ethnic significance.

A member of the Ohlone Indian Cultural Association was present as an observer during both days of the digging. These observers supervise the work to be sure no significant sites — such as a burial place — are disturbed or damaged by the archeologists or the potential construction.

In this instance, Breschini said, there has already been a great deal of disturbance in the area. The buildings were bulldozed when they were removed, and the findings show that much of the historical material has been mixed together.

"Whenever that happens," he said, "The value is tremendously reduced."

Digging in the field next to the Bayview has produced the railroad bed of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The director said it may be a track from the S.P. Loma Prieta line, and appears to be of standard gauge.

Two Southern Pacific section houses had been associated with the area about the turn-of-the-century, and the Norton Phillips Lumber Yard was located on another parcel at the rear. Mattison's Apple Packing shed, an apple dryer and vinegar works were nearby.

Archeological digging has been done in the backyard areas of the section houses, and the digs were made along the foundation lines for the proposed structures.

"If the findings are significant, we can work out ways the areas can be preserved," he said.

Breschini said the project developers have been cooperative about the archeological survey, and have a positive attitude toward the work. If the site proves historically valuable, ways will be found to allow the project to proceed while the important areas are protected.

"If it's not significant," he added, "They will be free to move ahead."