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MTA Will Search for Remains at East Harlem Burial Ground

By DNainfo Staff on January 31, 2011 12:32pm



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DNainfo Reporter/Producer

EAST HARLEM — MTA officials have confirmed that their 126th Street Bus Depot was built on top of a colonial-era African burial ground, and now say that they plan to conduct more archeological tests in search of artifacts and remains.

"The MTA acknowledges that at one time it appears there was an early colonial burial ground in the immediate vicinity," Kevin Ortiz, a spokesman with the MTA, told the *New York Post*

(http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/manhattan/mta_grave_task_at_historic_harlem_8d0o2SXzqTILDPjFmCJnRN).

Community leaders had feared that MTA plans to overhaul the bus depot in 2015 would destroy whatever may have been left of the burial ground (<http://www.dnainfo.com/20100201/manhattan/harlem-leaders-worry-african-burial-ground-will-be-completely-lost-history>).

Ortiz told the paper that archeologists would test for remains and other artifacts before construction of the new depot begins.

Records from Elmendorf Reformed Church, the parish that oversaw the burial ground roughly located between 126th and 127th Streets on First Avenue, show that the cemetery was used as the final resting place of African-Americans for generations in Manhattan.

A coalition of leaders, including Rep. Charles Rangel and State Senators Bill Perkins and Jose M. Serrano, pushed for the MTA and Department of Transportation to conduct tests and protect the burial ground (<http://www.dnainfo.com/20100319/manhattan/mta-pledges-archaeological-probe-into-east-harlem-african-burial-ground>) ahead of the planned construction projects in March of last year.

Rev. Patricia Singletary, the current pastor of Elmendorf Church, has said that the ultimate goal would be to build a memorial on the grounds that's similar to the African Burial Ground National Monument in lower Manhattan.



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