Expert says bones from 1800s grave

Body found in former cemetery site

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Lansing State Journal

BATH TWP. — Human bones found at a Christmas tree farm near Clark and Chandler roads likely were left behind when other bodies were relocated, a MSU anthropologist said Tuesday.

The body of a man found Sunday near the Discount Trees site on Clark Road was buried in the 1800s when the land was used as a burial ground, said Michigan State University anthropology professor Norman Sauer.

"By all indications, there was a cemetery there that was relocated somewhere near Bath. I'm pretty sure that this was one of those burials that was left behind," he said.

Dan Dudley, owner of the 75,000-tree farm, said he bought the farm in the mid-1980s with plans to turn the 100-acre farm into a seasonal operation.

Dudley said he heard rumors the land was once an ancient American Indian burial ground, but after consulting with his realtor and other longtime residents, was told otherwise.

He was convinced until this weekend.

That's when construction crews, working to increase parking lot space, leveled a hill near the road. That's when his 8-year-old son, Dash, found a human skeleton amidst crumbling clay.

"Once the crews knocked past the few feet of clay, bones were exposed," Dudley said.

Workers thought the bones were animal remains until his son found human remains, he said.

Michigan State Police officials called in Sauer to examine the bones.

His findings: Unidentified man, probably adult. Buried in the 1800s.

Sauer said he believes there might be other bodies buried during the 1800s on the land, but has no plans to revisit the land unless asked to by police.

Members of the American Indian community inspected the site to see if researchers had found the remains of ancestors, Sauer said.

Dudley said he'll put construction plans on hold until the investigation is complete, although business will continue.

"It's probably inconvenienced business a bit, but we're still open," he said. "It's all been pretty interesting."