

THE PAST CLINGS

A reburial issue in San Francisco:

SAN FRANCISCO – San Francisco has finally found a resting place for the remains of nearly 100 Gold Rush-era residents unearthed three years ago during construction of the Asian Art Museum.

Cypress Lawn Memorial Park in Colma, a small city with 17 cemeteries just south of San Francisco, has offered to take the remains of 97 men, women and children who were originally buried in the city's first public cemetery – now the site of City Hall, the museum and the new city library. The Board of Supervisors is scheduled to vote on the move next week.

Some city leaders are worried that museum visitors, especially those with Buddhist or Taoist beliefs, will stay away when they learn that the deceased still haven't been properly buried. Over the past three years, the remains – mostly fragments of bones, clothing and jewelry – have been stored in boxes in the basement of the coroner's office.

“I have never set foot in the museum. I’m uncomfortable because the dead haven’t been taken care of,” said Chinatown activist Rose Pak. “If people were told about it, I’m sure lots of people would have second thoughts about going in.”

The Civic Center area was home to the Yerba Buena Cemetery until the 1870s, when the city disinterred the graves to make room for the original City Hall. All the graves were supposed to be moved to a new cemetery near Twin Peaks, but for unknown reasons many were left behind.

After City Hall was destroyed by a 1906 earthquake and fire, the site became home to the city’s main library until 1999, when construction began on the Asian Art Museum. Museum officials anticipated the discovery of remains, so they hired an archaeologist to remove and document them.

Adorno and Horkheimer – *what is needed is not the preservation of the past, but the redemption of its hopes.*

It is all in the relationship.