

FOUNTAIN: Courthouse work turns up surprises

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The fountain apparently hasn't been operable for many years. A 1953 clipping from The Scranton Times shows the fountain being used as a planter for flowers.

Mr. McLane, 55, said the fountain is similar to the ones he remembers in the duck pond at Nay Aug Park and probably dates to the 1920s.

"If it's significant to somebody, we'd like to find out why," he said. "It may be nothing more than someone's great idea — 'Hey, let's get a fountain down there; I saw one in Brooklyn' — and it may be something else. If somebody put it there for a reason, we'd like to at least respect that and know its history."

If it has no special significance, it probably will be demolished, Mr. McLane said. Anyone with information about the fountain may call his office at 347-3668.

Ed Zurek, of Zurek Excavating, notifies Mr. McLane when he finds anything of interest. On Monday, it was a precast concrete base for a former generation of Courthouse Square lamppost; it was buried about 2 feet beneath a sidewalk at the rear of the courthouse. Mr. McLane examined and photographed the concrete block.

Earlier, Mr. Zurek uncovered a remnant of the courthouse's original flagstone sidewalk and part of the stone foundation for a wrought-iron fence.

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stuff," Mr. Zurek said. "You get to see all the different things people went through, all the aggravations they suffered, in order to get it done."

Some relics are of more recent vintage. Near the southeast corner of the square, workers found an inscribed stone commemorating 1,000 years of Ukrainian Christianity. The stone was placed there in 1988, but had been obscured by a Norway spruce planted at the same time.

Mr. McLane pledged the stone will find a new home on the square after the renovations.

"When I look at the impact of everything, I just want to be conscious of what we are chewing up," he said. "We are not the first ones here, and we are not going to be the last."

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JOHNSON BACHMAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Landscape architect Thomas J. McLane peers into the fountain on Lackawanna County Courthouse Square during renovations. He is trying to determine the origin of the fountain.

MYSTERIES JUST KEEP COMING

Courthouse Square project yields a long-forgotten water fountain.

BY DAVID SINGLETON

STAFF WRITER

Landscape architect Thomas J. McLane clambered onto the fountain on Lackawanna County Courthouse Square and peered inside.

"It does have plumbing," he said Monday, carefully stepping back off the massive concrete structure. "There are drain pipes in the bottom, so it is definitely a fountain."

But it is the not so obvious that Mr. McLane wants to know about: Who put the fountain

its significance, if any?

The \$8.3 million makeover of the square, part of a \$23.3 million renovation of the historic courthouse, has turned Mr. McLane into something of an amateur archaeologist. As unique or unusual artifacts from the building's past turn up — sometimes literally — he is documenting them.

"You have to be respectful of history," said Mr. McLane, who is overseeing the landscaping for the courthouse project.

The fountain, situated near

ument on the southwest corner of the square, is a mystery. About 4½ feet tall and 10 feet in diameter, the concrete fountain was fabricated in place at some point in the square's distant past. Its base extends up to 6 feet below the surface.

Although he knew it was there, Mr. McLane said the fountain was largely hidden from public view by the evergreen shrubs that surrounded it. Unlike many of the other objects on the square, there was no plaque indicating its origin.