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Plymouth: Archaeological dig looks for where, exactly, the Pilgrims set up shop

BY STEVE BURNS – POSTED ON JULY 2, 2014

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It's a sort of treasure hunt happening on Burial Hill in downtown Plymouth...

"We're using historic maps and old documents to help give us an idea about what might be in an area," said Christa Beranek, with the Fiske Archeological Center at UMass Boston.

"Everybody in Plymouth knows their local history inside-out and backwards and they know their ancestors on a first-name basis," Beranek said. "And yet for all that really detailed documentary knowledge, we don't have a really specific location for where any of the first houses were."

It's a long process, starting with what's called "ground-penetrating radar."

"Where we send radar energy into the ground and it bounces back from different kinds of reflectors, and that can help tell us what might be buried in the ground," Beranek said. "And because we're on the edge of a historic burial ground, it just helps us make sure we're avoiding anything like unmarked burials."

That phase ended at the end of June, and Beranek says it mainly gave them an idea of the 19th-century buildings on the Burial Ground. They'll move on to excavation and hopefully have a definitive answer by 2020, the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrims' arrival.



UMass Boston students work on the dig on Burial Hill in Plymouth

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