

early days to bury the dead in basements during the winter when the ground too was hard outside, she said.

"As long as the property has been on the market, people have known about the tombstone in the basement," commented Zoning Enforcement Officer Mary Greene on Tuesday. Mrs. Francisco has had preliminary meetings with zoning staff regarding the property, she said.

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# Creepy tale of tombstone in basement

by Susan Faber

What began as a routine zoning issue has taken an unusual twist, as knowledge of a tombstone in the basement of a house at 555 Nova Scotia Hill Road has surfaced.

The house was purchased two months ago by Christina Francisco, who wants to demolish it and develop the property. "I heard that somebody was buried there," Ms. Francisco said on Tuesday.

"If there is somebody buried there, we would want to do the right thing," Ms. Francisco said.

The house was the residence of the late Joseph Zuraitis and had belonged formerly to the parents of his wife Alice, said Town Historian Florence Crowell, who was contacted on Monday by Susan Zuraitis, the wife of Joseph Zuraitis's grandson. Susan Zuraitis "told me there

was a body in the basement," Mrs. Crowell said, with the words "Levi Peck RIP" inscribed on it.

During two days of intensive research, Mrs. Crowell went through existing records of all births, deaths, and marriages in Watertown from 1780 through 1950.

"There is no 'Levi Peck' in the records," Mrs. Crowell said. "His death was never recorded."

"My husband and his brothers are devastated that the house is being demolished," Mrs. Zuraitis said on Tuesday. The house "has got a lot of character," she said. The original part of the structure was built in the late 1760s, Mrs. Crowell said, and additions were built later.

Mrs. Zuraitis said she contacted Mrs. Crowell about the tombstone because "no one knew about it,"

she said. Although it is unknown whether a body is actually buried beneath the stone, her 17-year-old son has seen the tombstone, Mrs. Zuraitis said, and told her that it is at the end of a box stall that is the length of a body.

It was common in Watertown's

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