

TNT buried during WWII cleaned up

520 HP
LEWISTON (AP) — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has begun unearthing buried TNT from a World War II research site, but the fate of radioactive uranium residue buried at the same time is still undecided.

The former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works, which straddles the towns of Lewiston and Porter in Niagara County, was turned into a research and dumping ground during World War II's Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb.

A group of citizens concerned about the site's proximity to homes and several schools has mobilized over fears the cleanup could be dangerous.

"History's ultimate weapon was made here and we may turn out to be its victims," said Timothy Henderson, president of Residents Organized for Lewiston-Porter's Environment.

FRONT PAGE
The Corps of Engineers has been digging up the TNT and stockpiling it on land owned by Chemical Waste Management Corp. in the Town of Porter, the only hazardous-waste disposal site in the Northeast.

The fate of the uranium residue in an adjacent site will not be known until at least two more years of studies are completed, Judith Leithner, the Corps of Engineers project manager, said.

The uranium is stored in an underground cement cell lined with a waterproof membrane, set in thick clay walls and capped with three feet of clay, a foot of fill and six inches of topsoil, Leithner said.

Leithner said the corps is studying whether to make the buried waste more secure by adding to the three-foot clay cap above it, or to remove the material and ship it to another location.