

Tombstone unearthed

By Amanda Persico

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Finding a home for a grave marker is not an easy task.

The York Region branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society is trying to find a home for a grave marker found during the construction phase of the Bogart community, just north of the Leslie Street and Mulock Drive intersection. No remains were uncovered during the construction.

The grave marker, belonging to George Steadman, Aug. 18, 1870 to May 31, 1950, is sitting in a garden in the north end of Toronto, York Region OGS cemetery co-ordinator Nanci Pattenden said.

The grave marker is a standard two-foot tombstone commonly found in the 1950s and '60s and could have been from an old farm graveyard.

"It's a heavy stone to carry around," she said. "In the 1950s, not too many people were buried on a farm."

During the construction phase almost a decade ago, the contractor found the grave marker and took it home. Now, the contractor is selling his home, but wants to ensure the grave marker finds a home, Ms Pattenden said.

"The company stopped construction to verify there were no bodies buried there," the Newmarket resident said. "The contractor decided to salvage the stone instead of tossing it. It would be similar to throwing your grandmother in the garbage."

Ms Pattenden has spent years looking through cemetery transcripts, surname databases and ancestry website not to mention sifting through official documents, such as census reports, marriage, death and birth certificates. "This is somebody's heritage, someone's parent or grandparent," Ms Pattenden said.

After finding limited success in town documents, the researching team turned to obituaries in The Newmarket Era and immigration records.

"Right now, we're looking for any George," she said. "We don't know if George could be related to the owners of the old Steadman Stores around here or it could be a coincidence."

Ms Pattenden did come across a record for a Mr. Steadman and his wife, Annie Rimmer, who came over from England in 1923, but was unable to verify it was the same person.

Mr. Steadman's stone isn't the only one found in the area. In the 1960s, a resident renovating his home found a grave marker near Gorham Street. The limestone grave marker was for the infant son of John and Katharine Bogart, who died in 1817.

The marker is at the Elman W. Campbell Museum for safekeeping, museum curator Beth Sinyard said.

At one point, in the mid-19th century, there was a cemetery at the corner of Leslie and Gorham streets, Newmarket Heritage committee member Paul Millard said. Grave markers found in the area have been moved to the Newmarket Cemetery location off Main Street.

Finding Mr. Steadman's family is dependant upon what's already recorded, Mr. Millard said.

"The graveyard hasn't been there for more than 100 years," he said. "All we really have is a marker on a map and a stone with a name. We're snookered to find out."



Looking for a home. The York Region branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society is searching for a home for a grave marker found near Leslie Street and Mulock Drive.

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