

FRIENDS & NEIGHBOURS

Bob and Jane's grave situation

Epitaph: 'Wait not for me my husband dear, I am not dead but sleeping here, I was not yours but God's alone'

by Paul Dalby
THE INDEPENDENT

BOB AND JANE CHAMBERS have a grave situation on their hands. They've discovered a 146-year-old headstone in their back garden but don't know what to do with it.

The Chambers found the weather-beaten granite grave marker under a pile of paving stones behind their house on Maiden's Road, Warkworth.

yours but God's alone, He loved me best and called me home."

The Chambers have no idea who the woman was or how her gravestone ended up on their land. But some historical research by *The Independent* may have thrown some light on the mysterious Sarah Ann and George Sexton.

The Upper Canada Archives reveals a story published in the Cobourg

Among the many veterans from Northumberland County who fought in the historic victory over the invading Americans was none other than George Sexton of Warkworth.

The story noted that Mr. Sexton, by that time aged 84, had served in the 1st Durham Regiment at the Battle of Queenston Heights, perhaps the most notable British victory in the War of 1812, which also claimed the life of the British commander General Sir Isaac Brock.

Mr. Sexton and the other surviving old soldiers of that 1812 war - from Brighton, Castleton, Port Hope, Cobourg and Colborne - finally received their pension in a ceremony at Cobourg's Victoria Hall. The amount was just \$20.

The *Sentinel's* story observed that the "tough and hardy sons of Canada", mostly in their 80s and 90s, were still in remarkably good health and were able "if needed to shoulder a musket again in the service of their country".

Little more is known of George Sexton of Warkworth after his brave war service was recognized. There is no confirmation that he was the husband of Sarah Ann Sexton.

Indeed at 23, Sarah Anne would have been a very young bride to the old soldier, who would have been 71 years old at her death.

But such an age difference was certainly not uncommon in pioneer times when marriage - even to an older man - was about the only acceptable stamp of



A painting from the Ontario Archives depicts a pivotal battle in the War of 1812.

respectability for young, single women.

It's also possible that Sarah Ann could have been married to George Sexton's son. It was common practice for sons to carry the same name as their father with only a different middle name for identification.

The quality of Sarah Ann's headstone and the engraving - still in remarkable condition after a century-and-a-half - suggests that her husband, whoever he was, was a man of means.

But Jane Chambers said: "We really want to find out where they came from and if there are still any descendants of the family alive."

"It doesn't matter where they live, we would get the headstone back to them," Bob Chambers said. "It would be interesting to find out the whole story."

The Chambers moved into the house from downtown Warkworth four years ago. The house was built by

George and Marilyn Nash in 1977.

Before 1977, it was just farmer's fields originally belonging to the Maiden family.

It was typical of the many farms in Percy Township, which back in 1871 boasted a healthy popula-

tion of 4,084 - mostly Canadian but with a considerable Irish element.

Many of the newly-arrived landowners were soldiers, just like George Sexton, who - along with his wife Sarah Ann - remains a mystery to the Chambers.



Bob Chambers cleans off a granite headstone found buried.

"We were tidying up for the Garden tour and decided to move the paving stones out into the garden," Ms. Chambers said. "Then we found the headstone underneath lying facing down."

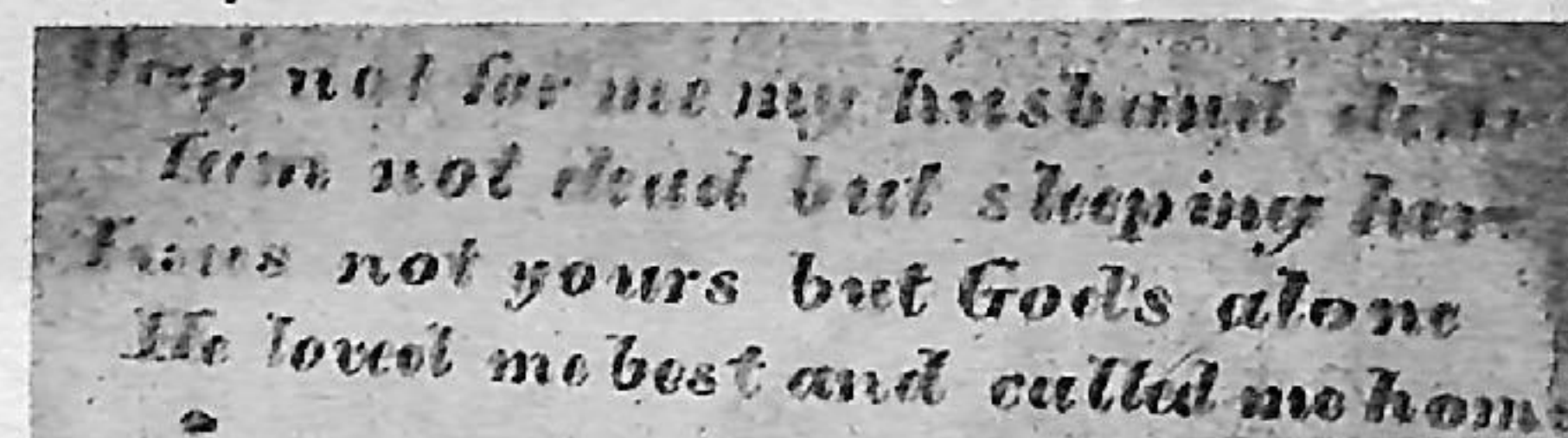
"When my husband flipped it over, we were shocked to see it was someone's headstone."

The headstone is engraved to: "Sarah Ann, wife of George Sexton, died July 29, 1863, aged 23 years, 6 months, 5 days."

Beneath that inscription is a poem which reads: "Wait not for me my husband dear, I am not dead but sleeping here, I was not

Sentinel on Saturday, Sept. 25, 1875 - 12 years after the death of Sarah Ann Sexton.

The *Sentinel's* story reported that "after a long and dreary waiting of over sixty years, the country has at last given a slow and slight attention to the claims of these noble veterans who went forth in the American war of 1812-15 to shed their blood for their country."



Epitaph on Grave of Sarah Ann, who died on July 29, 1863.



Jane Chambers reads the inscription on grave marker.